TEN SERMONS

Formerly Preach'd

ON

Several Occasions,

WITH

TWO DISCOURSES

OF

CONSCIENCE.

By the Most Reverend Father in GOD,
JOHN Lord Archbishop of *York*.

The Second Edition.

LONDON,
Printed for *Walter Kettilby*, at the *Bishop*'s *Head* in St. *Paul*'s Church-Yard, 1691.

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Jovis xxvii. *die Augusti*, 1674. *Annoq;*
Regni Regis CAROLI *Secundi Anglie*, &c. xxvi.

ORdered by this Court, That Mr. *Sharpe* be desired to Prine his Sermon, Preached on *Sunday* last before the *Lord Mayor* and *Aldermen* of this City, at the *Guild-Hall* Chappel

Wagstaffe.

Imprimatur.

Sept. 11. 1674.

Gulielm. Wigan, Rev. in Ch. Pat. ac D°. D°. *Hunf.* Episc. *Lond.* in Sac. Dom.

Hooker Mayor.

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The Things that make for Peace.

Delivered in a

SERMON

Preached before the Right Honourable

THE

Lord Mayor,

AND THE

Court of ALDERMEN,

AT

GUILD-HALL-CHAPPEL,

Upon the 23. of *August*, 1674.

By *JOHN SHARPE*, D. D. now Lord Arch-Bishop of *YORK*.

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TO THE
Right Honourable
Sir *WILLIAM HOOKER*,
Lord Mayor
OF
LONDON,
And to the
COURT of ALDERMEN.

Right Honourable,

THE *following Diſcourſe was never deſigned to go further than your own* Chappel, *otherwiſe it had not been left ſo Imperfect: But ſince you have thought fit to Order it ſhould be more Publick, it would ill become me, who*

do in it ſo earneſtly preſs Obedience *to* Superiours, *to diſpute your Commands. Such therefore as it is, I humbly preſent it to you, heartily wiſhing it may in ſome degree miniſter to the Promoting* Peace *and* Unity, *and* Brotherly Love *among us, which is the only thing therein aimed at, by*

Right Honourable,

Your moſt Humble and

Obedient Servant,

JOHN SHARPE.

ROM.

Rom. xiv. 19.

Let us therefore follow after the things that make for Peace.

THE *Apoſtle's* deſign in this *Chapter*, is to perſwade the *Roman* Chriſtians to live *Peaceably* one with another, notwithſtanding all their different *Perſwaſions* in matters of *Religion*.

He doth not ſo much ſet himſelf to *Reſolve* their *Controverſies*, to determine which *Side* held the Trueſt Opinions; as to *Silence* their *Diſputes*, to allay thoſe *Bitterneſſes* and *Animoſities* with which the ſeveral *Parties* proſecuted each other, to oblige them to *embrace* one another in Chriſtian *Charity*; and though there could not be an *Unity* of *Judgment* among them; (which certainly is a thing can never be expected; mens apprehenſions concerning things being neceſſarily almoſt as various as are their *Tempers* and *Complexions*;) yet nevertheleſs they ſhould ſo order the matter, that there might at leaſt be an *Unity* of *Affection*, and an amicable communication one with another.

He repreſents to them that they had nothing to do to *Judge* or *Cenſure* their *Brethren*; for they were *Ver. 4. & ſeq.* *God's* Servants, and to *Him* only they ſtood or fell; that though they were *miſtaken* in their Notions as to the Points in Controverſie, yet nevertheleſs, if what was done upon thoſe *miſtaken* Principles, was done out of a pure heart, and as in obedience to the Commands of God, it would be accepted of him.

He

Ver. 13, 14, 15. He is so far from countenancing their *Religious Quarrels*, that he adviseth even those that held the true side of the Question, to submit for *Peace* sake, and rather to *recede* from their *right*; to forbear doing that which they might lawfully do, than by undue use of their *Liberty* to cast a *Stumbling-block* before the weak uninstructed Dissenters, and be a means of their forsaking Christianity.

Ver. 17. And the more to enforce this Discourse he assures them, that however they might pretend *Religion* for their present differences, yet in truth, *That* was of all other things the least interested in them. They were much mistaken in the nature of *it*, if they took it to consist in such small, inconsiderable, external things as they made the matter of their *Dissensions*. *Christianity* was not much concerned, whether they ate such kind of *Meats*, or whether they did not eat them; whether they kept *Sabbaths* and *New-Moons* holy to the Lord, or whether they esteemed every day alike. *That* was a more *inward*, and a more *noble* thing. It was the hearty practice of *Righteousness* and *Peace*, and *Rejoycing to do good*. These were the things that made a man a *Christian*; and *in These*

Ver. 18. *things* (saith the Apostle) *he that serveth Christ is indeed acceptable to God, and approved of men.*

And then at last from these several *Particulars* he draws this *general* Inference by way of *Exhortation*: *Let us therefore follow after the things that make for peace.*

I have given you a brief account of the *Apostle*'s discourse in this *Chapter*; and I could heartily wish that I had no occasion to deal any further upon this Subject. Happy were it for *Christians*, if things were in that posture among them, that they were no further concerned in these Discourses of Scripture, than only to be instructed in the sense of them. But, alas, whoever understands any thing of the state of

Christianity,

Christianity, now for these many Ages in the World, will easily see that no one Point of our *Religion* has been in all times more necessary to be daily preached, to be earnestly pressed, to be loudly sounded in the ears of Christians, than this of *Peace* and *Love*, and mutual sufferance under their different *apprehensions* of *Religion*.

It has fared (as one hath observed) with *Christianity* in this matter, as it did with the *Jewish* Dispensation of old. The *great* and *principal* Commandment which God gave the *Jews*, and which (as they themselves teach) was the *Foundation* of all their *Law*, was to *worship* the *God* of *Israel*, and *Him* only to *serve*: yet such was the sottishness and perverseness of that *People*, that *This* was the Commandment, that of all others they could never be obliged to keep; but they were continually running a whoring after the *Gods* of the *Nations*, notwithstanding all the various ways and methods that God made use of to reclaim them from that sin. What the *Worship* of *one God* was to the *Jews*, that *Peace* and *Love*, and *Unity* is to the *Christians*, even the *grand* distinguishing *Law* and *Character* of their *Profession*: and yet with *sorrow*, and to our unspeakable *confusion* it may be spoken, There is no *Religion* that ever was known in the World hath given Birth to so many *Heresies*, hath been intituled to so many needless Disputes and Quarrels, hath been crumbled into so many *Sects* and *Parties*, hath been prosecuted by all the several *Pretenders* to it with so much heat and fury, and implacable animosity, hath been made the occasion of so much Tumult, War, and Bloodshed, as this excellent, this innocent, and gall-less *Religion* of ours. *Mr.* Hales.

To go no further than our selves, and the posture we stand in at this day; if ever any *Society* of *Christians* could be obliged to live in Brotherly *Love and Communion* with one another, we certainly are the Men. For besides the

engagements of our *Religion*, common to us with other *Christians*, we have all the external advantages which a wise and well-temper'd Settlement of *Church-affairs*, a mild and just *Government*, and excellent Laws can give to the promoting thereof.

Religion is establish'd among us in as great *Purity* as ever perhaps it was since the *Apostles* times.

The *Government* we live under, is neither so *Lax* as to defeat its own ends, nor so *Severe* as to exercise Tyranny over our Consciences.

The *Terms* of our *Communion* are more large, and moderate, and easie to be submitted to by men of different *Persuasions*, than any other *Church-Society* that I know of doth allow at this day. And this is so acknowledged, that there is scarce any of the several disagreeing *Parties* among us, but next to their *own Church* would prefer *Ours* before all others.

The *Doctrines* that make up our publick *Confession* are expressed in such a *latitude*, that they have been, and are generally assented to, by most of the *Dissenters* from us. And that wherein *We* differ from others, is not our *adding* to the *Faith* new and questionable *Doctrines*, but our *rejecting*, or not *imposing* their *Innovations*.

Our *Publick Service* hath not a *Prayer* in it but what any Christian in the World may lawfully say *Amen* to.

Our *Ceremonies* are but *few*, and those very *decent*, and unquestionably of *Primitive Antiquity*.

The *Penalties* which the *Laws* inflict upon those that *separate* from our *Communion* are so easie, and so moderate, that methinks *Sober* men should be ashamed to call them *Persecutions*; and should rather sit down contentedly under them, than by endeavouring, or desiring any *Alteration*, endanger the bringing the *Church*, and possibly *themselves* into far greater inconveniences than those they now suffer.

In

In a word, ſo excellent is the temper of our preſent *Settlement*, that there is no *Church* in the World, with which men of differing *Perſwaſions* may more ſafely communicate; and under which, even *Diſſenters*, if they be peaceable, may live more happily than the *Church* of *England*.

But now, how do we demean our ſelves under this happy Conſtitution of affairs? What *Fruits* of the *Goſpel* of *Peace* do we yield ſuitable to theſe great external Advantages? One might rationally expect to ſee *Religion* in quite another *Face* among us, than it hath in other parts of the World; and that enjoying ſuch excellent means of *Peace* and *Unity* as we do, and eſpecially having ſufficiently experienced the Miſeries of *Diſcord*; there ſhould no ſuch thing as *Faction* or *Diviſion* be heard of among us, but that we ſhould All like *Brethren* Chriſtianly joyn together with our *Common Mother*, and in ſmaller matters *bear* with one anothers Weakneſſes, and Ignorances, and Miſtakes, as doubtleſs *God* himſelf will; and as the *Church*, which is principally concern'd, in many caſes doth.

But alas, the event doth too notoriouſly diſcover the contrary to all this, and that to the ſhame of our ſelves, and the reproach of our Church, and the ſcandal of Religion, and the rejoycing of our Enemies, and the grief of all good men.

Never were our *Differences* higher, our *Oppoſitions* one of another more violent, our *Schiſms* and *Separations* more numerous, and more obſtinate than they are at this day.

We diſpute eternally, we quarrel without grounds, and without meaſure; we ſtickle for every *Trifle*, and are as much concerned for the propagating a ſilly *Notion*, which might very well be let alone without our being a jot the worſe Chriſtians, as if the *Fundamentals* of our *Religion* lay at ſtake.

We revile, we reproach, we beſpatter one another; and

though we be extremely *ſcrupulous* in ſmaller matters, yet we make no *ſcruple* of ſacrificing *charity*, and the *Churches Peace* to every *humour*, and every *paſſion*. And whileſt we are zealous in the matter of an *Opinion*, or a ſmall Ceremony; we often loſe all ſenſe of Religion, and good Manners, and even Humanity it ſelf.

What the Conſequences of theſe unreaſonable and unchriſtian *Feuds* may be, we know not. I pray God they do not end, either in a very great *Corruption*, or a total *Subverſion* of *Chriſtianity* among us. It was theſe *ſins*, if it be lawful to gueſs at the reaſons of God's Judgments from outward Appearances, that brought deſolation upon thoſe once flouriſhing *Churches* of *Afric* and *Aſia*; and who knows, if they be obſtinately perſiſted in, but they may be an occaſion of *God's removing* his *Candleſtick* from us alſo.

And now is it not needful that every *Chriſtian* ſhould uſe his utmoſt endeavour to *ſtill* that *Spirit* of *Contention* that is gone forth among us? Is it not needful that every *Son of Peace* ſhould bring ſome *water* to the quenching of our *Flames*?

Let me therefore this day take up St. *Paul*'s exhortation to you; let me beſeech you, let me conjure you; *if there be any Conſolation in Chriſt, if any Comfort of Love, if any Fellowſhip of the Spirit, if any Bowels and Mercies*, that now at length laying aſide all *bitterneſs* and *evil ſpeaking*, all *variance* and *emulation*, all needleſs Diſputes and Contentions, you would unanimouſly joyn together in *following after the things that make for peace*.

And that my *Exhortation* may be the more effectual to the purpoſes I intend it for, I ſhall purſue it; *Firſt*, by way of *Direction*; *Secondly*, by way of *Motive*. *Firſt*, I ſhall reduce the *Duty* here enjoyned of *following the things that make for peace* to its *particular Rules* and *Inſtances*, that you may know what is to be done by you in order to the performance of it.

Secondly,

Secondly, I ſhall ſet before you the very great *Engagements* and *Obligations* that lie upon us to *follow after the things that make for peace*; that you may be perſwaded the more vigorouſly to ſet about it.

And both theſe things I ſhall manage as near as I can, with reſpect to the preſent *ſtate* and *poſture* of *Affairs* among us, and withal ſhall always remember that my buſineſs is not to preſcribe *Laws* or *Rules* to my *Superiors* for their Carriage in theſe matters, but only to repreſent the Duty that Chriſtians of a *private capacity* do owe to the *Publick*, and to one another.

As for the *Firſt* thing, which is, to *direct* and *inſtruct* you in the performance of this Duty of *following the things that make for peace*, you may be pleaſed to take notice, That this Duty hath a twofold Object, according to the two different Relations and Capacities in which we are to be conſidered; to wit, the *Church* our *Mother*, and *particular Chriſtians* our *Brethren*. In the *firſt* Relation we are conſidered as *Subjects*; in the *ſecond* as *Fellow Chriſtians*. With reſpect to the *former*, the *Peace* we are to purſue implies *Obedience*, and *Preſervation of Communion*, in oppoſition to *Schiſm* and *Separation*. With reſpect to the *latter*, it implies mutual *Love* and *Charity*, in oppoſition to *Quarrels* and *Contentions*.

My buſineſs therefore upon this *firſt* head is to ſhew what are the *Particulars* of our *Duty*, what are the means that conduce to *Peace*, in both theſe reſpects.

And firſt of all, I begin with what is due from us to the *Church* in order to *Peace*, as *Peace* ſtands in contradiſtinction to *Schiſm*. And this Point I ſhall beg leave to diſcuſs very freely, and very particularly; becauſe I fear we have generally many falſe *Notions* about it; and yet it is a matter of ſuch conſequence, that I doubt not but the right underſtanding of it would go a great way to the *Cure* of the ſad *Diviſions* that are among us.

And that I may diſcourſe with more clearneſs, and more evidence, I ſhall deliver what I have to ſay in this matter, by way of *Propoſitions*; taking my Riſe from the *firſt Principle* of *Church-Society*, and ſo regularly aſcending.

The *firſt Propoſition* I lay down is this; *That every* Chriſtian *upon the very account of his being ſo, is a* Member *of the* Church *of* Chriſt, *and is bound to joyn in* External Communion *with it where it can be had.*

For the clearing of this, you may be pleaſed to conſider, that the primary Deſign and Intention of our Saviour in his undertaking for us, was not to ſave *particular perſons* without reſpect to a *Society*, but to gather to himſelf a *Church* out of *Mankind*, to erect and form a *Body Politick*, of which himſelf was the *Head*, and particular Chriſtians the *Members*: and in this method through *Obedience* to his *Laws* and *Government* to bring men to *Salvation.*

And this is no more than what is the Senſe and Language of the *Holy Scriptures*; wherein whatever Chriſt is ſaid to have *done* or *ſuffered* for *Mankind*, he is ſaid to have done for them, not as *ſcattered Individuals*, but as *Incorporated* into a *Church.* Thus *Chriſt loved the Church, and gave himſelf for it. Chriſt redeemed the Church with his own Blood. Chriſt is the Saviour of his Body*, that is to ſay, the *Church*, with many paſſages of the like importance.

Eph. 5. 25. *Act.* 20. 28. *Eph.* 5. 23.

The plain Conſequence from hence is, that every perſon, ſo far as he is a *Chriſtian*, ſo far he is a *Member* of the *Church*; and by virtue of that Relation to the *Church* it is, that he hath any Relation to *Chriſt*, or any Title to the *Priviledges* of the *Goſpel.*

And agreeably to this Notion, it is very plain, that *Baptiſm*, which is by all acknowledged to be the *Ceremony* of Initiating us into *Chriſtianity*, is in Scripture declared to be the *Rite* whereby we are entred and admitted into the *Church.*

Church. Thus St. *Paul* expreſly tells us, that *by one Spirit we are all baptized into one Body.* And again, that *Chriſt hath ſanctified*, that is to ſay, ſeparated *his Church by the waſhing of Water and the Word.* 1 *Cor.* 12. 13. *Eph.* 5. 26.

Now then it being thus evident, that every Chriſtian as a *Chriſtian*, is a Member of that *Body* of *Chriſt* which we call the *Church*: there will be little need of taking pains to prove, that every ſuch perſon is obliged to joyn in *External Communion* with the *Church* where he can do ſo: for the very nature of this *Church-membership* doth imply it. Without this, neither the *Ends* of *Church-Society*, nor the *Benefits* accruing to us therefrom can be attained.

Firſt, not the *Ends* of it: The Ends of Church-Society are the more *Solemn Worſhip* of God, and the publick Profeſſion of our *Religion*, and the mutual Edification one of another: Now, how theſe can be in any meaſure attained without aſſociating together in *publick Aſſemblies*, and *mutual Offices*, and other *Acts* of *External Communion* with one another, cannot any ways be imagined.

And as little in the ſecond place, can it be conceived how without this we can be made partakers of the Benefits and Priviledges that *Chriſt* hath made over to the *Members* of his *Church*. For we are to conſider that God hath ſo ordered the matter, and without doubt for this very reaſon, to unite us the more firmly in *Society*, that the Priviledges of the *Goſpel*, ſuch as Pardon of Sin, and the Grace of the Holy Spirit, are not ordinarily conveyed to us ſo immediately by *God*, but that there muſt intervene the Miniſtry of *Men*. God's holy *Word* and *Sacraments* are the Chanels in which they are derived to us; and *thoſe* to whom he hath committed the Miniſtry of *Reconciliation* and the *Power* of the *Keys*, are the *Hands* that muſt diſpence them. We have no promiſe of *Spiritual Graces*, but by theſe means: ſo that in order to the partaking of them, there is an abſolute neceſſity laid upon

upon us of joyning and communicating with the *Church*.

It is true indeed, God doth not so tie himself up to these *means*, but that he can, and will in some cases, confer the Benefits of them without them: as in case of a *General Apostasie* of the *Church*; or of *Persecution* for *Religion*; or of an unjust *Excommunication*, or any other case where Communion with a *true visible Church* is denied to us. But though *God* doth act *extraordinarily* in *extraordinary* cases, where these *means* cannot be had; yet this doth not at all diminish, much less take away the necessity of making use of *them* when they can be had.

From what hath been discoursed on this *first Proposition*, we may by the way, gather these two things: I only name them. *First*, How untrue their *Position* is that maintain, that all our Obligation to Church-Communion, doth arise from a voluntary admission of our selves into some particular Congregation, and an explicit Promise or Ingagement to joyn with it in Church-Ordinances.

2. How wildly and extravagantly they discourse that talk of a *Christianity at large*, without relation to a Church, or Communion with any Society of *Christians*.

The *second Proposition* is, *That every one is bound to joyn in* Communion *with the established* National Church *to which he belongs, supposing there be nothing in the* Terms *of its* Communion *that renders it unlawful for him so to do.*

For if we are bound to maintain Communion with the Catholick Church, as I have before proved, it is plain, that we are bound to maintain Communion with that part of it, within whose Verge the Divine Providence has cast us. For we cannot communicate with the Catholick Church, but by communicating with some Part of it: and there is no communicating with any Part of it, but that under which we live, or where we have our Residence.

Well, but it may be said, that there may be several Distinct

ſtinct Churches in the place where we live. There may be the fixed Regular Aſſemblies of the National Church; and there may be ſeparate Congregations; both which are, or pretend to be *Parts* of the Catholick Church; ſo that it may be all one as to our communicating with *that*, which of *theſe* we joyn with, ſuppoſing we joyn but with one of them; and conſequently there is no neceſſity from *that* Principle, that we ſhould hold Communion with the *Publick Aſſemblies* of the *National Church*.

But as to this I deſire it may be conſidered, that That, that lays an Obligation upon us to joyn in Communion with the *Church* (to wit our being *Members* of that *one Body* of *Chriſt*) doth alſo lay an Obligation upon us, as much as in us lies to preſerve the *Unity* of *that Body*, (for this both the Fundamental *Laws* of *Society*, and the expreſs Precepts of *Chriſtianity* do require of every *Member*:) But now to make a *Rent* in, or *ſeparate* from any *Part* of the *Body* of *Chriſt*, with which we may lawfully communicate (and ſuch we now ſuppoſe the *eſtabliſhed Aſſemblies* of the *Nation* to be) is directly contrary to the preſerving the *Unity* of *that Body*: And therefore certainly ſuch a *Rent* or *Separation* muſt be unlawful. And if ſo, then it muſt be unlawful alſo to joyn with any Congregation of men among us that have made ſuch a *Rent* or *Separation*.

So that, let our pretences be what they will, ſo long as the *fixed Regular Aſſemblies* of the *Nation* wherein we live, do truly belong to the *Catholick Church*, and we can lawfully joyn with them, it is certain we are bound ſo to do, and not to joyn with thoſe *Congregations* that have withdrawn themſelves from *them*; for to do this, would be to joyn in *Society* with *Separatiſts*, would be a partaking of their *Sin*, and a breach of the *Apoſtle's* Precept of *Avoiding thoſe that cauſe Diviſions*. Rom. 16. 17.

The *third Propoſition* is, *That the being a* Member *of any*

Church, *doth oblige a man to ſubmit to all the* Laws *and* Conſtitutions *of that* Church.

This Propoſition is in the general ſo unqueſtionable, that no *ſober* man will deny it. And indeed, it is the *Baſis* upon which all *Societies* are founded, and by which they do ſubſiſt. For to ſuppoſe a *Society*, and yet to ſuppoſe the *Members* of it not under an Obligation to obey its Laws and Government, is to make Ropes of Sand, to ſuppoſe a *Body* without *Sinews* and *Ligaments* to hold its parts together.

So that all the queſtion here, is concerning the nature and extent of the *Churches* Power over her *Members*, how far, and in what inſtances ſhe hath *Authority* to oblige them. Which is a queſtion not difficult to be anſwered, if men would come to it without paſſion and prejudice.

For it muſt be acknowledged, in the firſt place, that the *Church* muſt, as all other *Societies*, be entruſted with at leaſt ſo much *power* over her *Subjects*, as is neceſſary for the ſecuring her own *Welfare* and *Preſervation*: For to think otherwiſe, is to ſuppoſe *God* to have founded a *Church*, and intended the *Well-being* and *Continuance* of it; which are things that every one muſt grant: And yet to ſuppoſe that he hath denied her the uſe of the *Means* without which that *Well-being* and *Continuance* cannot be attained; which is monſtrous and contradictious.

Furthermore it muſt be granted, that the *Welfare* and *Preſervation* of the *Church* cannot be ſecured but upon theſe two Suppoſitions. *Firſt*, That Proviſion be made for the *due* and *orderly* performance of the *Worſhip* of *God*. *Secondly*, That there be means of maintaining *Peace* and *Unity* among its *Members*. This latter is neceſſary to the *Welfare* and *Preſervation* of a *Church*, as a *Society*, the former is neceſſary to it as a *Religious Society*.

Now then this being admitted, it follows in the general, that whatever *Power* over her *Subjects* is neceſſary in order

to

to either of these things, all that at least must be supposed to be lodged in the *Church*, that is to say, in *Those* that have the *Government* of it.

So that from hence it is plain, in the *first* place, that the *Church* hath power so far to restrain the exercise of her *Subjects Liberty*, as to oblige them to all such Laws, Rules, Orders, and Ceremonies as She shall establish for the more Solemn, Regular, Decent, and convenient Administration of *Religious Affairs*. And if it be questioned whether her *Appointments* do indeed conduce to that end, of that She her self is to be the *Judge*; Her Members being no farther concerned therein, than only before they obey her *Impositions* to see that they be not repugnant to the known *Laws* of *God*. This Power the *Church* must be supposed to have, otherwise She will not be enabled to make Provision for the first thing whereon her *Welfare* doth depend, *viz.* the Performance of God's Worship and Service in a *due* and *orderly* manner.

Secondly, From hence also it is plain, that the *Church* must be furnished with a Power to *end* and *determine* Controversies of *Religion* that arise among its *Members*: that is to say, to give such an *Authoritative* decision of them, as that all *Parties* are bound to acquiesce in it: for without this she would be defective in the *second* thing required to her *Welfare* and *Preservation*, *viz.* maintaining her self in *Peace* and *Unity*.

But here it may be taken notice, that this Power of *ending Controversies*, which we ascribe to the *Church*, doth not imply any *Authority* over our *Judgments*; or that in vertue thereof she can oblige us to give an *inward assent* to her *Determinations*, any further than she gives us evidence for the *Truth* of them: (which is that extravagant Power the *Church* of *Rome* doth challenge to her self) but only an *Authority* over our *Practices*, that she can oblige us to submit

ſo far to her *Definitions*, as not to *act* any thing contrary to them. A Power in the *former ſenſe* is not neceſſary to the *Churches Peace*; and the reaſon is, becauſe our *Judgments* and *Opinions*, ſo long as we keep them to our ſelves, cannot poſſibly cauſe any diſturbance in, or do any injury to *Society*. But a Power in the *latter ſenſe* is abſolutely neceſſary; for if men may be allowed to vent and publiſh what ever *fancies* come into their heads, and the *Church* have no *Authority* to impoſe ſilence upon them, it cannot be avoided but ſhe will be over-run with *Hereſies*, and embroiled in infinite *Quarrels* and *Controverſies*, to the deſtruction of her publick Peace.

The *fourth Propoſition* is, *That we can have no juſt cauſe of withdrawing our* Communion *from the* Church *whereof we are* Members, *but when we cannot communicate with it without the* Commiſſion *of a* Sin.

For if we are bound to Communicate with the *Church* when we can lawfully do ſo, as hath been before proved; it is plain we are bound ſo long to *continue* our Communion with the *Church*, till it be unlawful to continue in it any longer: But it cannot be unlawful to continue in her Communion, till ſhe require ſomething as a Condition of her Communion that is a *Sin*.

So that there are but *Two* caſes, wherein it can be lawful to *withdraw* our *Communion* from a *Church*, becauſe there are but two caſes wherein *Communion* with her can be *ſinful*. One is, when the *Church* requires of us as a *Condition* of her *Communion*, an *Acknowledgement* and *Profeſſion* of that for a *Truth*, which we know to be an *Error*. The other is, when the *Church* requires of us as a Condition of her Communion, the joyning with her in ſome Practices, which we know to be againſt the *Laws* of *God*. In theſe two Caſes to withdraw our Obedience to the *Church* is ſo far from being a *Sin*, that it is a neceſſary *Duty*; becauſe we have an obligation

gation to the *Laws* of God antecedent to that we have to *those* of the *Church*; and we are bound to obey *these* no further than they are consonant or agreeable to *those*.

But now from this discourse it will appear how insufficient those Causes, how unwarrantable those Grounds are, upon which many among us have proceeded to *Separation* from our *Church*.

For, *first*, If what I have laid down be true, it cannot be true that *unscriptural Impositions* can be a warrantable cause of *separation* from a *Church*; supposing that by *Unscriptural* be meant no more than only what is neither *Commanded* nor *Forbid* in the Sciptures. For the Actions required by these *Unscriptural Impositions*, are either in themselves *lawful* to be done, or *not lawful* to be done. If they be in themselves *unlawful* to be done, then they do not fall under that notion of *Unscriptural* we here speak of; they are downright *Sins*, and so either *particularly* or in the *general*, forbid in the *Scripture*. If they be in themselves *lawful* to be done, then it cannot be imagined how their being *commanded* can make them *unlawful*: So that in this case, there is no *Sin* in yielding obedience to the *Church*, and consequently no cause of withdrawing our Communion from it.

Nor *secondly* can it be true, that the Church requiring from us any *doubtful* or *suspected* practices as Conditions of her Communion, is a just cause of *Separation*: for we must have at least as much certainty of the *unlawfulness* of the *actions* enjoyned, as we have of our *Obligation* to the *Authority* that enjoyns them, before we withdraw our *Obedience* to it, otherwise we do not proceed upon safe grounds; but now we are *absolutely certain*, that God hath commanded us to obey them that have the rule over us, but we are not *certain* that the *actions* we here speak of, are any where *forbid* by him; for if we were, they would be no longer *doubtful* or *suspected*, they would be *certain Sins*: so that if we will follow

low the ſurer ſide, as all Chriſtians in theſe caſes are bound to do, we muſt continue our *Obedience* to the *Church*, notwithſtanding we *ſuſpect* or *doubt* the lawfulneſs of her Commands.

Neither *thirdly* can it be true, that *Errours* in a *Church* as to matter of *Doctrines*, or *Corruptions* as to matter of *Practice*, ſo long as thoſe *Errours* and *Corruptions* are only *ſuffered*, but not *impoſed*, can be a ſufficient cauſe of *Separation*; the reaſon is, becauſe theſe things are not *Sins* in us, ſo long as we do not joyn with the *Church* in them. So that ſo long as we can Communicate with a *Church*, without either profeſſing her *Errours*, or partaking in her *ſinful Practices*, as in the preſent caſe it is ſuppoſed we may do; ſo long we are bound upon the *Principle* before laid down not to *ſeparate* from her.

Neither in the *fourth* and laſt place, is the enjoying a more profitable *Miniſtry*, or living under a more pure *Diſcipline* in another *Church*, a juſt cauſe of forſaking the *Communion* of that whereof we are now *Members*. The reaſon is, becauſe we are not to commit the leaſt *crime* for the attaining the greateſt good in the World: Now it is a *crime* to forſake the *Communion* of the *Church* whereof we are *Members*, ſo long as her *Communion* is not *ſinful*: But the enjoyment of a *leſs profitable Miniſtry*, or a *leſs pure Diſcipline* doth not make her *Communion ſinful*; therefore the enjoyment of a *more profitable Miniſtry*, or a *more pure Diſcipline*, cannot make a *Separation* from her *lawful*.

The *fifth* and laſt *Propoſition* is, *That though we have a juſt cauſe to refuſe Communion with the* Church *whereof we are* Members *in ſome inſtances, yet we are not therefore to proceed to ſo* total *a* Separation *from it as to erect* New Churches *in contradiſtinction to it, or to joyn with thoſe that do.*

The reaſon is clear from the foregoing Principles, *viz.* becauſe we are bound to *obey* as far as we can, and where we cannot,

cannot, to *ſuffer*; but at no hand to diſturb the *Peace*, or break the *Unity* of the *Church*.

Though we cannot comply with all that the *Church* requires of us, yet ſtill we muſt joyn with *Her* in thoſe other things where we lawfully can.

Nay, though the *Church* ſhould require thoſe things as *Conditions* of her *Communion* ſo that unleſs we conform to them, we cannot at all communicate with her; yet ſtill there is a *Paſſive Obedience* due from us: We muſt ſit ſtill and ſuffer, and not make a Rent in the *Church* by ſetting up one *Altar* againſt another.

This is like the ſetting up a new and a diſtinct *Government* in the Bowels of the *State*.

Nothing can juſtify ſuch a degree of departure as this, but only one thing; to wit, ſo great and general a *Corruption* of the *Church*, both in *Doctrine* and *Practice*, that the *Salvation* of all that communicate with her, is thereby endangered: Which though it be the condition of the *Members* of the preſent *Church* of *Rome*, yet I dare ſay, few among us will affirm to be the caſe of them that communicate with the *Church* of *England*.

Thus have I as briefly as I could repreſented to you the Particulars of that Duty we owe to our *common Mother*, in the *preſervation* of her *Unity* and *Communion*. And I hope, I have not been ſo zealous for *Peace* as to have been at all injurious to *Truth*.

I am confident I have ſaid nothing but what is very agreeable to *Scripture* and *Reaſon*, and the ſenſe of the Beſt and Ancienteſt *Chriſtians*. And I am certain, I have not intrenched upon any of thoſe Grounds upon which our *Anceſtors* proceeded to the *Reformation* of *Religion* among us. And for moſt of the things here delivered, we have alſo the *ſuffrage* of ſeveral, and thoſe the moſt learned and moderate of our *diſſenting Brethren*.

And

And now if after this any one be offended, as indeed these kind of discourses are seldom very acceptable; all I can say, is this, That the *Truths* here delivered, are really of so great importance to *Religion* and the *publick Peace*, that they ought not to be dissembled or suppressed, for any *bad reception* they may meet with from *some men*: but as for the *manner* of delivering them, I have taken all the care I could, not to give offence to any.

I now pass on to the *second* part of my *Task* upon this *Head*, which is to consider the *Duty* recommended in the *Text*, with relation to *particular Christians* our *Brethren*.

And here my business is to direct you to the *Pursuit* of *those things that make for Peace*; as *Peace* signifies mutual *Love* and *Charity* in opposition to *Strife* and *Bitterness* and *Contentions*.

The things that make for *Peace*, in this sense, are more especially these that follow, which I shall deliver by way of *Rules* and *Advices*.

The *first Rule* is to distinguish carefully between matters of *Faith*, and matters of *Opinion*; and as to these latter, to be willing that every one should enjoy the liberty of judging for himself.

This is one thing that would help very much to the extinguishing of those unnatural *Heats* and *Animosities*, which have long been the Reproach of Christians. If men would set no greater value upon their *Notions* and *Opinions* than they do deserve; if they would make a difference between *necessary* points, and those that are not so: and in those things that are not *necessary*, would not rigorously tie up others to their measures, but would allow every man to abound in his own sense, so long as the *Churches Peace* is not hereby injured, we should not have so many bitter Quarrels and Heart-burnings among us. But alas, whilest every one will frame a *Systeme* of *Divinity* of his own head,

and

and every puny *Notion* of that *Syſteme*, muſt be *Chriſtn'd* by the name of an *Article* of *Faith*; and every man that doth not believe juſt as he doth, muſt ſtraight be a *Heretick* for not doing ſo: How can it be expected but we muſt wrangle eternally?

It were heartily to be wiſhed, that Chriſtians would conſider, that the *Articles* of *Faith*, thoſe things that God hath made neceſſary by every one to be believed in order to his *Salvation*, are but very *few*, and they are all of them ſo *plainly* and *clearly* ſet down in the *Scripture*, that it is impoſſible for any ſincere honeſt-minded man to miſs of the *true ſenſe* of them. And they have further this Badge to diſtinguiſh them from all other *Truths*, that they have an immediate influence upon mens *Lives*, a direct Tendency to make men *Better*; whereas moſt of thoſe things that make the matter of our Controverſies, and about which we make ſuch a noiſe and clamour, and for which we ſo bitterly cenſure and anathematize one another, are quite of another nature: They are neither ſo *clearly revealed* or *propounded* in the Scripture, but that even good men through the great difference of their Parts, Learning and Education, may after their beſt endeavours vary in their ſentiments about them. Nor do they at all concern a *Chriſtian Life*, but are matters of pure *notion* and *ſpeculation*. So that it cannot with any reaſon be pretended that they are *points* upon which Mens *Salvation* doth depend. It cannot be thought that *God* will be offended with any man for his *Ignorance* or *Miſtakes* concerning them. And, if not, if a man may be a *Good Chriſtian*, and go to Heaven whether he holds the right or the wrong ſide in theſe matters; for God's ſake, Why ſhould we be *angry* with any one for having other Opinions about them than we have? Why ſhould we not rather permit men to uſe their *Underſtandings* as well as they can, and where they fail of the *Truth*, to bear with them, as *God* himſelf without

queſtion will; than by ſtickling for every impertinent unneceſſary *Truth*, deſtroy that *Peace*, and *Love*, and *Amity* that ought to be among *Chriſtians*.

The *ſecond* thing I would recommend, is a great *ſimplicity* and *purity* of *Intention* in the purſuit of *Truth*; and at no hand to let *paſſion* or *intereſt*, or any *ſelf-end* be ingredient into our *Religion*.

The practice of this, would not more conduce to the diſcovery of *Truth*, than it would to the promoting of *Peace*. For it is eaſie to obſerve, that it is not always a pure concernment for the Truth, in the points in Controverſie, that makes us ſo zealous, ſo fierce, and ſo obſtinate in our Diſputes for, or againſt them; but ſomething of which that is only the *Maſk* and *Pretence*, ſome *By-ends* that muſt be ſerved, ſome *Secular Intereſt* that we have eſpouſed, which muſt be carried on.

We have either engaged our ſelves to ſome *Party*, and ſo its Intereſts right or wrong muſt be promoted: or we have taken up an opinion inconſiderately at the firſt, and appeared in the favour of it, and afterward our own credit doth oblige us to defend it: or we have received ſome *ſlight* or *diſappointment* from the Men of *one way*, and ſo in pure pet and revenge, we paſs over to their Adverſaries. Or it is for our gain and advantage, that the Differences among us be ſtill kept afoot; or we deſire to get our ſelves a name by ſome great *Atchievments* in the Noble *Science* of *Controverſies*; or we are poſſeſſed with a ſpirit of Contradiction; or we delight in Novelties; or we love to be ſingular.

Theſe are the things that too often both give birth to our Controverſies and alſo nouriſh and foment them.

If we would but caſt theſe *Beams* out of our eyes, we ſhould both ſee more *clearly*, and certainly live more *peaceably*. But whileſt we purſue *baſe* and *ſordid ends* under the pretence of maintaining *Truth*, we ſhall always be in *error*, and always in *contention*. Let

Let us therefore quit our ſelves of all our pre-poſſeſſions; let us mortify all our *Pride* and *Vain-glory*, our *Paſſion* and *Emulation*, our *Covetouſneſs* and *Revenge*; and bring nothing in the world to our *Debates* about Religion, but only the *pure love* of *Truth*: and then our Controverſies will not be ſo long; and they will be more calmly and peaceably managed, and they will redound to the greater good of all *Parties*.

And this I dare ſay further to encourage you to labour after this temper of mind, That he that comes thus qualified to the ſtudy of *Religion*, though he may not have the luck always to light on the *Truth*, yet with all his *errors*, be they what they will, he is more acceptable to God, than the Man that hath *Truth* on his ſide, yet takes it up or maintains it to ſerve a turn. He that believes a *Falſehood*, after he hath uſed his ſincere endeavours to find the *Truth*, is not half ſo much a *Heretick*, as he that profeſſeth a *Truth* out of *evil Principles*, and proſtituteth it to *unworthy ends*.

The third Rule is, Never to quarrel about *Words* and *Phraſes*, but ſo long as other men mean much what the ſame that we do, let us be content though they have not the luck to expreſs themſelves ſo well.

I do not know how it comes to paſs, whether through too much heat and eagerneſs of diſputing, that we do not mind one anothers *Senſe*; or, whether through too much love to our own manner of *Thinking* or *Speaking*, that we will not endure any thing but what is conveyed to us in our own *Methods*: But, really, it often happens that moſt bitter Quarrels do commence, not ſo much from the different *Senſe* of the contending Parties, concerning the things they contend about, as from their different *Terms* expreſſing the ſame *Senſe*, and the different *Grounds* they proceed upon, or *Arguments* they make uſe of for the proof of it.

For my part, I verily believe that this is the Caſe of ſeveral of thoſe *Diſputes*, in which we *Proteſtants* do often engage at this day. I do not think, in many points, our *Differences* are near ſo wide as they are ſometimes repreſented, but that they might eaſily be made up with a little allowance to mens *Words* and *Phraſes*, and the different *Methods* of deducing their Notions.

It would be perhaps no hard matter to make this appear in thoſe *Controverſies* that are ſo much agitated among us concerning *Faith* and *Juſtification*, and the *neceſſity of good works to Salvation*, and *Imputed Righteouſneſs*, and the *difference between Virtue and Grace*; with ſome others, if this were a fit place for it. The difference that is among us as to theſe Points, is poſſibly not much greater than this, that ſome men in theſe matters ſpeak more clearly and fully; others more imperfectly and obſcurely. Some men convey their ſenſe in plain and proper words; others delight in *Metaphors*, and do perhaps too far extend the *Figurative* expreſſions of *Scripture*: Some reaſon more cloſely and upon more certain *Principles*; others poſſibly may proceed upon weaker grounds, and *miſapply Texts* of Scripture, and diſcourſe more looſely. But both *Parties* (eſpecially the more moderate of both) ſeem to drive at much what the ſame thing, though by different ways, as appears from this, that being interrogated concerning the *Conſequences* of their ſeveral *Opinions*, they generally agree in admitting or *rejecting* the ſame.

But *fourthly*, another thing that would make for peace is this; never to charge upon men the *Conſequences* of their *Opinions* when they expreſly diſown them.

This is another thing that doth hugely tend to widen our Differences, and to exaſperate mens ſpirits one againſt another; when having examined ſome *Opinion* of a *Man*, or *Party* of *Men*, and finding very great *abſurdities* and evil *conſequences*

ſequences neceſſarily to flow from it, we preſently throw all thoſe into the *diſh* of them that hold the *Opinion*, as if they could not own the *one*, but they muſt neceſſarily own the *other*: whereas indeed, the men we thus charge, may be ſo innocent in this matter, that they do not in the leaſt dream of ſuch *Conſequences*; or if they did, they would be ſo far from *owning* them, that they would abhor the *Opinion* for their ſakes.

To give you an inſtance or two in this matter: It is a Doctrine maintained by ſome, That *God's Will is the Rule of Juſtice*; or that *every thing is therefore juſt or good, becauſe God wills it*. Thoſe that are concerned to oppoſe this Doctrine, do contend that if this *Doctrine* be true, it will neceſſarily follow, that no man can have any certainty of the *Truth* of any one *Propoſition* that God hath revealed in Scripture. Granting now that this can by juſt conſequence be made out, yet I dare ſay, thoſe that hold the aforeſaid *Doctrine* would be very angry, and had good reaſon ſo to be, if they were told that they did not, no, nor could not, upon their *Principles* certainly believe the *Scripture*.

Some Men think that they can with demonſtrative evidence make out, that the *Doctrine* of *God's irreſpective Decrees*, doth in its Conſequences overthrow the whole *Goſpel*, that it doth deſtroy the nature of *Rewards* and *Puniſhments*, cuts the very *Sinews* of mens endeavours after virtue; makes all *Laws*, *Promiſes*, *Exhortations* perfectly idle and inſignificant things; and renders God the moſt *unlovely Being* in the world. Now ſuppoſing all this to be true, yet it would be a moſt unjuſt and uncharitable thing to affirm of any that believe that Doctrine (many of whom are certainly pious and good men) that they do maintain any ſuch impious and blaſphemous Opinions as thoſe that are now mentioned.

The ſum of all is, that a man may believe a *Propoſition*, and not believe all that follows from it: not, but that all the

the *deductions* from a *Propoſition* are equally true, and equally credible with the *Propoſition* from whence they are deduced: But a man may not ſo clearly ſee through the *Propoſition* as to diſcern that ſuch *Conſequences* are really deducible from it: So that we are at no hand to charge them upon him, unleſs he do explicitly own them.

If this Rule was obſerved, our Differences would not make ſo great a noiſe, nor would the *Errors* and *Heterodoxies* maintained among us appear ſo monſtrous and extravagant; and we ſhould ſpare a great many hard words and odious appellations, which we now too prodigally beſtow upon thoſe that differ from us.

The *fifth* Rule is, to abſtract mens *Perſons* from their *Opinions*; and in examining or oppoſing *theſe*, never to make any reflections upon *thoſe*.

This is a thing ſo highly reaſonable, that methinks no pretender to ingenuity ſhould ever need to be called upon to obſerve it. For it ſeems very abſurd and ridiculous in any *Argument* to meddle with that, that nothing concerns the *Queſtion*. But what do *Perſonal Reflections* concern the *Cauſe* of *Religion*? what ever it may be to the *Reputation* of an *Opinion*, I am ſure it is nothing to the *Truth* of it, that ſuch or ſuch a man holds it.

And truly, if men would leave this impertinence, we might hope for a better iſſue of our *Religious Debates*: but whileſt men will forſake the *Merits* of the *Cauſe*, and unmanly fall to railing, and diſparaging Mens *Perſons*, and ſcraping together all the ill that can be ſaid of them, they blow the Coals of Contention, they ſo imbitter and envenom the Diſpute, that it rankles into incurable diſtaſts and heart-burnings.

Chriſtians would do well to conſider, that theſe mean arts of expoſing Mens *Perſons* to diſcredit their *Opinions*, are very much unworthy the *Dignity* of their *Profeſſion*, and

and moſt of all miſ-becoming the *Sacredneſs* and *Venerableneſs* of the *Truth* they contend for. And beſides, no Cauſe ſtands in need of them, but ſuch an one as is extremely baffled and deſperate; and even then they are the worſt Arguments in the world to ſupport it: For quick-ſighted men will eaſily ſee through the Duſt we endeavour to raiſe; and thoſe that are duller will be apt to ſuſpect from our being ſo angry and ſo waſpiſh, that we have but a bad matter to manage.

We ſhould conſider that Mens *Perſons* are *Sacred* things, that whatever power we have to judge of their *Opinions*, we have no authority to judge or cenſure *Them*. That to bring *Them* upon the Stage, and there throw dirt on them, is highly rude and uncivil, and an affront to *Human Society*, and the moſt contrary thing in the world to *Chriſtian Charity*, which is ſo far from enduring Reproaches and evil Speaking, that it obliges us to cover as much as we can all the *Faults*, and even the very *Indiſcretions* of others.

The *ſixth* and laſt thing I ſhall recommend to you as an Expedient of *Peace*, is a vigorous purſuit of *Holineſs*.

Do but ſeriouſly ſet your ſelves to be *good*: Do but get your *Hearts* deeply affected with Religion as well as your *Heads*, and then there is no fear but you will be all the *Sons of Peace*.

We may talk what we will; but really it is our not *Practiſing* our *Religion* that makes us ſo *Contentious* and *Diſputatious* about it. It is our *Emptineſs* of the *Divine Life*, that makes us ſo *full* of Speculation and Controverſie: was but *That* once firmly rooted in us, theſe *Weeds* and *Exreſcencies* of *Religion* would preſently dry up and wither; we ſhould loath any longer to feed upon ſuch *Huſks*, after we once came to have a Reliſh of that *Bread*.

Ah! how little ſatisfaction can all our pretty *Notions* and fine-ſpun *Controverſies* yield to a Soul that truly hungers

gers and thirſts after Righteouſneſs? How pitifully, flatly and inſipidly will they taſte, in compariſon of the Divine entertainments of the *Spiritual* Life.

Were we but ſeriouſly taken up with the *Subſtantials* of our *Religion*, we ſhould not have leiſure for the *Talking Diſputing Divinity*; we ſhould have greater matters to take up our thoughts, and more profitable Arguments to furniſh out our Diſcourſes. So long as we could buſy our ſelves in working out our *Salvation*, and furthering the *Salvation* of others, we ſhould think it but a mean Employment to ſpend our time in ſpinning *fine Nets* for the catching of *Flies*.

Beſides this *Divine Life*, if it once took place in us, would ſtrangely dilate and enlarge our hearts in *Charity* towards our *Brethren*; it would make us open our arms wide to the whole Creation; it would perfectly work out of us all that Peeviſhneſs and Sowrneſs, and Penuriouſneſs of ſpirit, which we do too often contract by being addicted to a *Sect*, and would make us Sweet and Benign, and Obliging, and ready to receive and embrace all Conditions of men. In a word, it would quite ſwallow up all *Diſtinctions* of *Parties*; and what ever did but bear upon it the *Image* of *God* and the *Superſcription* of the Holy *Jeſus*, would need no other Commendatories to our Affection, but would upon that alone account be infinitely dear and precious to us.

Let us all therefore earneſtly contend after this Divine Principle of *Holineſs*; let us bring down *Religion* from our *Heads* to our *Hearts*; from Speculation to Practice: Let us make it our buſineſs heartily to love God and do his will, and then we may hope to ſee *Peace* in our days.

This, this is that that will reſtore to the World the Golden Age of *Primitive Chriſtianity*, when the *Love* and *Unity* of the Diſciples of Jeſus was ſo conſpicuous and remarkable, that it became into a *Proverb*, *See how the Chriſtians love one another*. This, this is that that will bring in the Accompliſhment

pliſhment of all thoſe glorious *Promiſes* of *Peace* and *Tranquillity* that *Chriſt* hath made to his *Church*: Then ſhall the *Wolf* dwell with the *Lamb*, and the *Leopard* lie down with the *Kid*: Then ſhall not *Ephraim* envy *Judah*, nor *Judah* vex *Ephraim*; but we ſhall turn our *Swords* into *Ploughſhares*, and our *Spears* into *Pruning-hooks*; and there will be no more conſuming or devouring in all God's Holy Mountain.

I ſhould now proceed to the ſecond general Point in my propoſed Method of handling this Text, *viz.* To ſet before you the very great *Engagements* and *Obligations* we have upon us to follow after the Things that make for Peace; and that,

1. From the *Nature* and *Contrivance* of our *Religion*.
2. From the great weight the *Scripture* lays upon this *Duty*.
3. From the great *Unreaſonableneſs* of our Religious *Differences*.
4. From the very evil *Conſequences* that attend them; as 1. In that they are great Hinderances of a good Life. 2. They are very pernicious to the *Civil Peace* of the *State*. 3. They are highly Opprobrious to Chriſtianity in general. And 4. and laſtly, Very dangerous to the *Proteſtant Religion*, as giving too many advantages, and too much encouragement to the *Factors* of the *Papacy*.

But I have I fear already exceeded the Limits of a *Sermon*, and therefore ſhall add no more.

God open our Eyes, that we may in this our day underſtand the Things *that belong to* Peace, *before they be hid from our Eyes.*

FINIS.

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Bishop

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THis Court doth deſire Mr. *Sharpe* to Print his Sermon Preached Yeſterday Morning before the *Lord Mayor* and *Aldermen* at *Bow-Church*, with what he had further prepared to deliver at that time.

Wagſtaffe.

Imprimatur.

Feb. 7. 167½. *Geo. Hooper*, Rev. D°. Archiep. *Cant.* à Sac. Dom.

A SERMON

Preached before the

Right Honourable

THE

Lord Mayor,

AND

ALDERMEN of LONDON,

AT

BOW-CHURCH.

By *JOHN SHARPE*, D. D. now Lord Arch-Bishop of *YORK*.

The Second Edition.

LONDON,
Printed for *Walter Kettilby*, at the *Bishop's Head* in St. *Paul's* Church-Yard, 1691.

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1 Tim. iv. 8.

Godlineſs is profitable unto all things, having a promiſe of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.

THeſe words are the enforcement of an Exhortation which St. *Paul* had made to *Timothy* in the Verſe beforegoing, which was that he ſhould *Avoid prophane and Old-wives Fables*; meaning thoſe impious and ſuperſtitious *Doctrines*, and the carnal and unchriſtian *Obſervances* that were grounded upon them (ſome of which he had mentioned in the beginning of this Chapter) which ſome at that time did endeavour to introduce into *Chriſtianity*: and inſtead of applying his mind to theſe, that he ſhould rather *Exerciſe himſelf unto* true *Godlineſs*.

This was the Exhortation. The Arguments wherewith he enforceth it are Two: Firſt, The Unprofitableneſs of theſe Carnal and Superſtitious *Doctrines* and *Practices*. *Bodily exerciſe* (ſaith he) *profiteth little*. Secondly, The real uſefulneſs of ſolid Vertue and Godlineſs to all the Purpoſes of life. *Godlineſs is profitable to all things, having a promiſe of this Life as well as of that which is to come.*

I ſhall not here meddle at all with the former part of the Apoſtle's *Exhortation* or the *Argument* that hath relation to it; but ſhall apply my ſelf wholly to the latter, craving leave moſt plainly and affectionately to preſs upon you the *Exerciſe* of *Godlineſs* upon thoſe Grounds and Conſiderations on which the Apoſtle here recommendeth it.

Indeed to a Man that conſiders well, it will appear the

moſt unaccountable thing in the World, that among all thoſe ſeveral *Exerciſes* that Mankind buſie themſelves about, this of *Godlineſs* ſhould be in ſo great a meaſure neglected, that Men ſhould be ſo diligent, ſo induſtrious, ſo unwearied, ſome in getting *Eſtates*, others in Purveying for *Pleaſures*, others in learning *Arts* and *Trades*; All in ſome thing or other relating to this *ſenſible* World; and ſo few ſhould ſtudy to acquaint themſelves with *God*, and the Concernments of their Souls, to learn the *Arts* of Virtue and Religious Converſation.

Certain it is, this *Piece* of *Skill* is not more above our reach than many of thoſe other things we ſo induſtriouſly purſue; nay, I am apt to think it is more within our power than moſt of them. For in our other Labours we cannot always promiſe to our ſelves certain ſucceſs. A thouſand things may intervene which we know not of, that may defeat all our plots and deſigns though never ſo carefully laid; but no Man ever ſeriouſly undertook the Buſineſs of Religion but he accompliſhed it.

Nay further, As we can with greater certainty, ſo can we with leſs pains and difficulty promiſe to our ſelves ſucceſs in this affair, than we can hope to compaſs moſt of our worldly deſigns which ſo much take up our thoughts. I doubt not in the leaſt but that leſs labour, leſs trouble, leſs ſolicitude will ſerve to make a Man a good *Chriſtian*, than to get an *Eſtate*, or to attain a competent skill in Humane Arts and Sciences.

And then for other Motives to oblige us to the ſtudy of *Religion*, we have incomparably more and greater than we can have for the purſuit of any other thing. It is certainly the greateſt Concernment we have in the World. It is the very thing God ſent us into the World about. It is the very thing that his Son came down from Heaven to inſtruct us in. It is the very thing by which we ſhall be concluded

everlaſtingly

everlastingly happy, or everlastingly miserable after this life is ended.

These things well considered, we may justly (I say) stand amazed, that Men should be so prodigiously supine and negligent in an Affair of this nature and importance, as we see they generally are.

If there can any account be given of this matter, I suppose it must be some such as this, That the *things* of this *World*, upon which we bestow our Care, our Time, our Courtship, are present to us. We see them every day before our Eyes; we taste, we feel the sweetness of them; we are sensible that their enjoyment is absolutely necessary to our present well-being: But as for spiritual matters they lie under a great disadvantage. They appear to us as at a great distance. We do not apprehend any present need we have of them: Nor do we fancy any sweetness or relish in them. Nay, on the contrary, we form the most frightful and dismal *Images* of them that can be. We look upon them not only as *flat*, and *unsavoury*; but as things which if we trouble our heads too much about will certainly ruine all our designs in this World. We think *Religion* good for nothing but to spoil good Company; to make us melancholy and mopish; to distract us in our Business and Employments; and to put so many Restraints upon us that we can neither with that freedom nor success pursue our Temporal Concernments, which we think necessary to our happiness in this World.

But let us suppose things to be thus with Religion as we have fancied, yet cannot this be any reasonable Excuse for our carelessness about it. What though there were no visible Benefit by a religious life in this World? What though the rewards of our pains about it were only in reversion? Yet since a time will come when it will be our greatest Interest to have been heartily Religious, is it not a madness

now

now to neglect it? What though *Religion* be a courſe of life difficult and unpleaſant; a way ſtrewed with Briers and Thorns; a way which if we follow, we are certainly loſt, as to our hopes of any thing here? Yet ſince a Time will certainly come when we ſhall wiſh, that we had been *good Chriſtians*, though we had loſt our *right eyes* and our *right hands* upon the condition; when we ſhall wiſh that we had purchaſed Virtue though at the rate of the loſs of the whole World: For God's ſake why ſhould we not be of the ſame mind now? Who but Fools and Children but will look upon that which ſhall certainly and unavoidably be, with the ſame regard as if it was now preſent?

But indeed, this is not the Caſe of Religion; This Buſineſs of Piety is not ſo formidable as we often repreſent it. It is no ſuch Enemy to our Temporal deſigns. It is a very innocent thing, and will do us no harm; though we look no further than this preſent World. It will hinder none of our delights or pleaſures, but will allow us to gratifie every *Appetite* that God and Nature hath put into us. And if any Man doubt this, let him name that Natural deſire, which the Chriſtian Religion doth forbid, or any way hinder the innocent ſatisfaction of: I am confident he ſhall be able to name none. Since this is the Caſe then, how much more *Childiſh* than *Children* ſhall we appear if we make ſo little reckoning of it? How inexcuſably Fooliſh ſhall we be, if we will not be at ſome pains to poſſeſs our ſelves of that which will be no manner of Hinderance to us in our affairs in this World; and will infallibly make us everlaſtingly happy in that which is to come?

But further; What if it be certain, that a Life of ſtrict virtue is not only no Hinderance to our Temporal deſigns, but a great furtherance of them? What if it can be Proved, that beſides the influence it has on our Happineſs in the next Life, it is alſo the beſt thing in the World to ſerve our

turns in this? And that nothing can ſo much contribute to the bringing about our *Worldly Aims*; no ſuch ready way to attain to what our very *Fleſh* and *Blood* moſt deſires, moſt delights in, as to be ſincerely *Pious*. What imaginable pretence can we then have for our contempt of *God* and *Virtue?* If this can be made to appear, ſure all our Objections will be fully anſwered; all our ſcruples ſatisfied; all our prejudices againſt *Religion* wholly removed; and every one that is not abandoned of his *Fortune* and his *Senſes*, as well as his *Reaſon*, muſt think himſelf concerned to become a Votary to it; ſince he can have no Temptation or Motive to *Vice* which will not more powerfully draw him to *Virtue*; and all the *ends* that the *one* can pretend to *ſerve*, will much more effectually be *ſerved* by the *other*; and he eſcapes an Eternity of Miſery, and gets everlaſting Life into the Bargain.

I think it therefore worth the while to ſpend the time now allotted me in making good this Point, and diſcovering ſomething at leaſt of that univerſal *Profitableneſs of Godlineſs* to the purpoſes of *Human Life*, that St. *Paul* in my Text aſſures us of.

But becauſe the *Studies* of Men are ſo infinitely various, and the *Ends* of *Life* to be ſerved ſo many, that it will be impoſſible to ſpeak *particularly* of them; it will be needful to pitch upon ſome *general* Heads, ſuch as, if they do not comprehend *all*, may yet take in *moſt* of thoſe things, to which the Labours and Endeavours of Men are directed, and in the acquiſition of which they have compaſſed their Deſigns; and to ſhew the *ſerviceableneſs* of *Religion* above all other means for the attaining of them. And I think, I cannot pitch better than upon thoſe three noted *Idols* of the World, *Wealth* and *Honour* and *Pleaſure*; theſe being the *Goods* which have always been accounted to divide Mankind among them; and into the ſervice of ſome one or *all*

of which All that set up for a happy life in this World do list themselves, how different and disagreeing soever they be from one another as to their particular Employments and ways of Living. I shall therefore make it appear, that *Godliness* and *Religion* is a very great furtherance to the acquisition of all these; and that no Man can take a more ready way either to *improve* his *Fortune*, or to *purchase* a *Name and Reputation among men*, or to *live comfortably* and *pleasantly* in this World, than heartily to serve *God*, and to live in the practice of every Virtue.

And in the *First* place, I begin with the *Conducibleness of Religion and Godliness to improve our outward Fortunes*; the Advantages of it for the *getting* or *encreasing* an *Estate*: For this is the thing to which our Thoughts are commonly first directed, as looking upon it as the Foundation of a happy Life in this World.

But here I desire not to be mistaken: I would not be thought to deal with you, as one of our ordinary *Empiricks*, that promises many brave feats in his *Bill*, which are indeed beyond the power of his *Art*: I do not pretend that *Wealth* and *Opulency* is necessarily entailed upon *Religion*; so that whoever is *good* shall presently be inabled to make Purchases, and to leave Lands and Livings to his Children. *Riches* are one of those things that are not so perfectly in our power, that all Men may hope for an equal share of them. The having more or less depends oftentimes not so much upon our selves, as upon that condition and quality in which we were born, the way and course of Life into which our Friends put us; and a hundred accidental circumstances to which our selves contribute nothing. But this I say; supposing the vertuous Man in equal circumstances with others; supposing him to stand upon the same level, and to enjoy the same fortuitous hits and external concurrences that they do,

do, and he ſhall by many odds have the advantage of them for thriving and improving in the World in any condition of life whatſoever.

So that, ſo far as the getting of Riches depends upon Humane endeavours; ſo far as it is an *Art*, and falls under *Precepts* and *Directions*: no Man alive can propoſe a better expedient in order thereto than a ſerious practice of Religion.

To make this good, let it be conſidered, that as to the *means* that do in a more direct and immediate manner influence upon the getting or improving an Eſtate (I ſpeak of *general means*, ſuch as are of uſe in all conditions of life; for to meddle with the Myſteries of any Particular Art or Trade, is not my purpoſe, as indeed it is beyond my skill;) as to ſuch means as theſe, I ſay, none can preſcribe more effectual than theſe four.

1. *Prudence*, in adminiſtring our Affairs.
2. *Diligence*, in that Vocation wherein God hath placed us.
3. *Thrift* and good *Husbandry*.
4. Keeping a good Correſpondence with thoſe in whoſe power it is to hinder or promote our Affairs.

If now it do appear that *Godlineſs* doth highly improve a Man in all theſe four reſpects; if it can be ſhewed that all theſe *Fruits* naturally grow and thrive better in a *Religious* Soil than any other, it will evidently follow; that ſuppoſing theſe above-named means do indeed contribute to the making of a Fortune, (and if they do not, no Man knows what doth; and we ſtrangely abuſe our Friends and our Children, when upon that account we recommend them to them) it follows, I ſay, that a life of Godlineſs is a mighty advantage to a Man for the purpoſes I am ſpeaking of.

And first of all, it will be easie to shew that *Godliness* doth above all things tend to *make a man wise and prudent, skilful and dexterous in the management of his Affairs of what nature soever:* for it doth very much clear and improve a Mans understanding, not only by a certain natural efficacy it hath (as I shall shew hereafter) to purifie the *Blood* and *Spirits*, upon which the perfection of our Intellectual Operations doth exceedingly much depend; but also by dispelling those *adventitious clouds* that arise in the discerning faculty from the noisome *Fumes* of Lust and Passion.

All Vice in the very nature of it, depraves and distorts a mans judgment, fills our minds with prejudices, and false Apprehensions of things; and, no Man that is under the dominion of it, can possibly have such a free use of his Reason as otherwise he might; for he will commonly see things, not as they are in themselves, but in those disguises and false colours which his Passion puts upon them: Upon which account he cannot avoid but he will be often imposed upon, and commit a thousand errours in the management of his Affairs, which the vertuous Man, whose Reason is pure and untinctur'd, is secured from. It cannot be imagined that either he should foresee events so clearly, or spy opportunities so sagaciously, or weigh things so impartially, or deliberate so calmly, or transact so cautiously, as the Man that is free from those manifold prepossessions which his mind is fraught with.

We see this every day verified in Men of all Ranks and Conditions, of all Callings and Employments. What a multitude of inconveniences, as to matter of dealing between Man and Man, doth an intemperate Appetite betray Men to? How silly and foolish is the most shrewd Man, when Wine hath gotten into his head? There is none so simple in his Company, but supposing him to be sober, and to have designs upon him, he shall be able to over-reach him.

him. What a World of Advantages doth the Angry Man give to him he deals with, by the haſtineſs and impatience of his Spirit? How often doth a Man do that in the fury and expectancies of a Luſt, for which when his Ardors are over, he is ready to bite his Nails for very vexation?

It is thus more or leſs with all kind of Vices, they craze a Mans head, and caſt a miſt before his Eyes, and make him often loſe himſelf in thoſe very ways wherein he pretends to be moſt skilful: So that it cannot be denied, that vertue is of a ſingular uſe in all matters wherein we have occaſion to make uſe of our Reaſon, and doth ſecure us from a multitude of Indiſcretions, which without it we ſhould unavoidably commit.

But ſecondly, *Godlineſs is alſo an excellent means to ſecure a mans diligence in the diſcharge of his Calling and Employment*, which is alſo a matter of very great conſequence in order to our thriving in the World: for it is the *diligent hand that maketh rich*, and the *man that is diligent in his buſineſs, that ſhall ſtand before Kings*; as *Solomon* tells us.

Now the Obligations that *Religion* layeth upon us to be careful in this point, are far ſtronger than what can ariſe from any other reſpect or conſideration ſoever; for it obligeth us to mind our Buſineſs, not only for our *own* but for *Gods* ſake: it chargeth the matter upon our Conſciences, and repreſents it to us as a part of that ſervice we owe to our *Creator*; and upon the due performance of which, no leſs than the everlaſting welfare of our Souls doth depend: for it aſſures us, that he that will call us to account for every *idle Word*, will much more do ſo for the *idle* expence of our *Time*, and the abuſe or not improvement of thoſe Talents that he hath entruſted us with. So that though we had no worldly inducement to make us diligent in our *Callings*, though we were ſure we ſhould ſuffer no prejudice in our Temporal Affairs by *Idleneſs*, and the neg-

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lect of our Buſineſs, (the fear of which yet is the only principle that puts Worldly Men upon action) nevertheleſs we were infinitely concerned not to be ſlack or negligent in this matter, in regard it is a point that will be ſo ſeverely exacted of us in the other World.

I know but one Objection that can be made againſt this Diſcourſe, and it is this, that what engagements ſoever *Religion* lays upon us to the careful ſpending of our time, yet its own *Exerciſes*, *Prayer* and *Reading*, and *Meditation*, take up ſo great a portion of it, which might be ſpent in the works of our ordinary Employment, that in effect it rather hinders our attendance on our Buſineſs than promotes it. But to this it is eaſily anſwered, that there is no Man ſo engaged in the World, but may if he pleaſe, make both his *Buſineſs* and his *Devotions* conſiſt together without prejudicing of either.

They have very falſe Apprehenſions of Religion, that think it obliges us to be always upon our Knees, or always poring upon ſome good Book: No, we do as truly ſerve God, and perform acts of Religion, when we labour honeſtly in our Vocation, as when we go to Church, or ſay our Prayers.

It is true indeed, we ought to have our hearts in Heaven as much as is poſſible, and to that end we ought to pray continually; but what hinders but we may do this in the midſt of our Buſineſs? There is no employment doth ſo entirely engroſs a Mans mind, but he may find leiſure if he pleaſe, many times a day, to entertain good thoughts, to quicken and reinforce his purpoſes, to caſt up a ſhort Prayer or a wiſh to God Almighty. And this I dare ſay for your encouragement, that ſuch a devout frame of heart, ſuch frequent and ſudden dartings of your Souls to God, while you are at your Buſineſs, will be ſo far from hindering or diſtracting you in it, that they will make you go about it with much more vigour and alacrity. But

But further, I would ask any Man that makes the foresaid Objection, supposing *Religion* ten times more expensive of our time than really it is, yet whether *Vice* and *Sin* be not much more so, than it would be. What a multitude of idle avocations from, and interruptions in our Business doth that daily occasion unto Men? What a number of impertinent Discourses, unprofitable Visits, needless points of Gallantry, long diversions by Drink, and Play, and Company; not to mention a great many other Debauches, doth it frequently engage Men in? and yet these we count no hinderances to our Business; these we complain not of; but to spend a quarter of that time in some devout Exercise, this is intolerable, it wasts too much of our time, our occasions will not permit it. Such partial and unjust estimators of things are we. But I proceed.

In the third place then, as for *Frugality* and *good Husbandry*, which is another necessary requisite for the getting of *Wealth*. *Religion* is unquestionably the best Mistress of it in the World; for it retrencheth all the exorbitances and wantonnesses of our Desires, which are the things that pick the money out of our Purses, and teacheth us to live after the measures of *Nature*, which every body knows are little, and cheap. It perfectly cuts off all those idle expences with which the Estates of other Men stand almost continually charged. The *Modesty* of it Cloaths us at a small rate; and its *Temperance* spreads for us, though a neat, yet a frugal Table. The attendance it requires on our Business will not allow us to embezel our money in Drinking or Gaming: nor will that *Purity* which is inseparable from it, ever let us know what the vast and sinking expences of lewdness and uncleanness are. In a word, it is *Vice* only that is the chargeable thing; it is only *Shame* and *Repentance* that Men buy at such costly rates. Godliness is saving, and full of

good

good Husbandry; nor has it any known or unknown ways of ſpending, except it be thoſe of *Charity*, which indeed, in proper ſpeaking, are not ſo much expence, as *Uſury*; for money ſo laid out, doth always even in this life return to us with Advantage.

The fourth and laſt means I mentioned of *Thriving* in the World, was the *keeping a good Correſpondence with all thoſe in whoſe power it is to hinder or promote our Affairs.* This every body knows to be a prime point in *Policy*; and indeed it is of a large extent, and of continual uſe. No Man can be ſuppoſed ſo independent on others, but that as he is ſome way beholden to them for all that he has, ſo he ſtands in need of their help and concurrence for all that he hopes for. Men do not make their fortunes of themſelves, nor grow rich by having Treaſures dropped in their Laps, but they do it by the benefit of Humane Society, by the mutual aſſiſtances and good offices that one Man performs for another. So that whoever intends to thrive in the World, it above all things imports him ſo to carry himſelf towards all that he hath any commerce with, ſo far to ſecure their favour and good will, that they may be obliged not to deny him any of thoſe aſſiſtances, which the exigency of his Affairs calls for at their hands. But now how this ſhould be done any otherwiſe than by being truly *Juſt* and *Honeſt*, by abſtaining from *Violence* and *Injury*, by being *True* to our *Truſts*, and *Faithful* in performing our *Contracts*; and in a word, by doing all thoſe good *Offices* to others which we expect they ſhould do unto us, which as our Saviour tells us is the ſum of *Religion*, is a very hard thing to conceive.

The uſefulneſs or rather the neceſſity of ſuch a Behaviour as this, in order to the gaining the good *Opinion* of others, and ſo ſerving our own ends by them, is ſo univerſally

ſally acknowledged, that even thoſe that make no real Conſcience of theſe things, are yet nevertheleſs in all their dealings forced to pretend to them. *Open* and *Bare-fac'd Knavery* rarely ſerves a Mans turn in this World, but it is under the mask of *Virtue* and *Honeſty* that it uſually performs thoſe Feats it doth; which is no leſs than a Demonſtration of the conduciveneſs of thoſe things to promote our Temporal Intereſts: for if the meer *Pretence* to them be a great advantage to us for this purpoſe, it cannot be imagined but that the *Reality* of them will be a greater. Certainly the *Power of Godlineſs* will be able to do more than the *Form* alone, and that if it was upon no other account than this, that no Man that is but a meer *Pretender* to *Honeſty* can long hope to keep his credit among Men. It is impoſſible to *act* a *Part* for any long time; let him carry it never ſo cunningly, his *Vizor* will ſome time or other be thrown off, and he will appear in his true Colours; and to what a World of miſchiefs and inconveniences he will then be expoſed, every one that knows how hated, how deteſted, how abandon'd by every one, a *Knave* and a *Villain* is, may eaſily determine. I hope I need ſay no more to convince you that *Religion* is the beſt *Policy*, and that the more hearty and conſciencious any Man is in the practice of it, the more likely he is to *Thrive* and *Improve* in the World.

So that I may now proceed to the *ſecond* general point to be ſpoken to, which is the *Profitableneſs of Religion for the attaining a good Name and Reputation*. How very much it conduceth to this purpoſe will appear from theſe two conſiderations.

Firſt, it lays the *ſureſt Grounds* and *Foundations* for a *good Name* and *Reputation*.

Secondly, Men are generally ſo juſt to it, that it rarely miſſes of a good Name and Reputation. The firſt is

an Argument from *Reason*, the second from *Experience*.

First of all *Godliness* layeth the *truest Foundation* for a *fair Reputation* in the World. There are but two things that can give a Man a title to the good *Opinion* and *Respects* of Men; the inward *Worth* and *Dignity* of his *Person*, and his *Usefulness* and *Serviceableness* to others. The first of these challengeth Mens *Esteem*, the other their *Love*. Now both these Qualities Religion and Virtue do eminently possess us of.

For first, the *Religious* Man is certainly the most *Worthy* and *Excellent* Person; for he of all others lives most up to the great *End* for which he was designed, which is the natural measure of the *Goodness* and *Worth* of Things.

What ever external Advantages a Man may have, yet if he be not endowed with virtuous Qualities, he is far from having any True Worth or Excellence, and consequently cannot be a fit object of our *Praise* and *Esteem*; because he wants that which should make him *Perfect* and *Good* in his *Kind*. For it is not a comely Personage, or a long Race of Famous Ancestors, or a large Revenue, or a multitude of Servants, or many swelling Titles, or any other thing without a Man that speaks him a *Compleat Man*, or makes him to *be* what he should be; but the right use of his Reason, the employing his Liberty and Choice to the best purposes, the Exercising his Powers and Faculties about the *fittest Objects*, and in the most *due measures*. These are the Things that make him *Excellent*. Now none can be said to do this but only he that is Virtuous.

Secondly, Religion also is that which makes a Man most *Useful* and *Profitable* to others; for it effectually secures his performance of all those Duties whereby both the security and welfare of the *Publick*, and also the Good and Advantage of *particular* Persons is most attained.

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It makes Men Lovers of their Country, Loyal to their Prince, Obedient to Laws; it is the ſureſt Bond and Preſervative of Society in the World; it obliges us to live peaceably, and to ſubmit our ſelves to our Rulers, not only for *wrath*, but alſo for *Conſcience* ſake: It renders us modeſt and governable in Proſperity, and reſolute and couragious to ſuffer bravely in a good cauſe in the worſt of times: It teacheth us to endeavour as much as in us lies to promote the good of every particular Member of the Community, to be inflexibly upright, to do hurt to none, but good offices to all, to be charitable to the Bodies and Souls of Men, to do all manner of kindneſſes that lie within our power: it takes off the ſowrneſs and moroſeneſs of our Spirits, and makes us Affable and Courteous, Gentle and Obliging, and willing to embrace with open Arms and an hearty Love, all ſorts and conditions of Men.

In every Relation wherein we can ſtand to one another, it influenceth upon us in order to the making us more uſeful; it makes *Parents* kind, and indulgent, and careful of the Education of their *Children*, and Children Loving and Obedient to their *Parents*: it makes Servants diligent to *pleaſe their Maſters, and to do their work in ſingleneſs of heart, not with eye-ſervice as men pleaſers, but as unto God*; and it makes Maſters gentle and forbearing, and careful to make proviſion for their Family, *as thoſe that know they have a Maſter in Heaven*, that *is no reſpecter of perſons*. In a word, there is no condition or capacity, in which Religion will not be ſignally an inſtrument of making us more ſerviceable to others, and of doing more good in the World. And if ſuch be the ſpirit and temper of it, how is it poſſible but it muſt needs acquire a great deal of Reſpect and Love from all ſorts of Men? If Obligingneſs and doing good in one's Generation do not endear a Man to thoſe that know him, do not entitle him to their Love and Affections, what thing in the World is there that is likely to do it?

But ſecondly, *True and unaffected Goodneſs ſeldom miſſes of a good Reputation in the World.* How unjuſt to Virtue ſoever Men are in other reſpects, yet in this they generally give it its due; where ever it appears it generally meets with Eſteem and Approbation; nay it has the good word of many that otherwiſe are not over-fond of Religion. Though they have not the grace to be *Good* themſelves, yet they rarely have the confidence not to commend *Goodneſs* in others.

Add to this, that no Man ever raiſed to himſelf a *Good name* in the World, but it was upon the ſcore of his *Virtues*, either *Real* or *Pretended*. Vice hath ſometimes got *Riches*, and advanced it ſelf into *Preferments*, but it never was accounted *Honourable* in any Nation.

It muſt be acknowledged indeed that it may and doth ſometimes happen, that *Vicious* Men may be had in *Eſteem*; but then it is to be conſidered, that it is not for their *Vices* that they are eſteemed, but for ſome *good Quality* or other they are eminent in. And there is no doubt, if thoſe Men were without thoſe *Vices*, their *Reputation* would be ſo far from being thereby *diminiſhed*, that it would become much more *Conſiderable*.

It muſt alſo be acknowledged on the other hand, that even *Virtuous* and *Good* Men may ſometimes fail of that *Eſteem* and *Reſpect* that their Virtue ſeems to merit, nay, in that degree as to be ſlighted and deſpiſed, and to have many *Odious Terms* and *Nick-names* put upon them: But when we conſider the caſes in which this happens, it will appear to be of no force at all for the diſproving what has been now delivered. For *firſt*, it ought to be conſidered what kind of *Perſons* thoſe are that treat *Virtue* and *Virtuous* Men thus *Contemptuouſly*; we ſhall always find them to be the *Worſt* and the *Vileſt* of Mankind; ſuch who have debauched the natural principles of their minds, have loſt all the

the notions and distinctions of *Good* and *Evil*, are fallen below the *Dignity* of *Humane Nature*, and have nothing to bear up themselves with, but *Boldness* and *Confidence*, *Drollery* and *Scurrility*, and turning into *Ridicule* every thing that is grave and serious: But it is with these as it is with the *Monsters* and *Extravagances* of *Nature*, they are but very *Few*. Few in comparison of the rest of Mankind, who have wiser and truer sentiments of things. But if they were more numerous, no Man of understanding would value what such Men said of him. It looks like a Crime to be commended by *such* Persons, and may justly occasion a Man to reflect upon his own actions, and to cry out to himself as *He* did of old, What have I done that these Men speak well of me?

But secondly, it cannot be denied but that some persons who are otherwise *Virtuous* and *Religious*, may be guilty of such Indiscretions as thereby to give others occasion to *slight* and *despise* them. But then it is to be considered, that this is not to be charged upon *Virtue* and *Religion*, but is the *Particular Fault* of the *Persons*. Every one that is *Religious* is not *Prudent*; the meanness of a Mans *Understanding*, or his Rash and Intemperate *Zeal*, or the moroseness of his *Temper*, or his too great *Scrupulosity* about little things, may sometimes make his Behaviour *Uncouth* and *Fantastick*, and betray him to do many actions which he may think his *Religion* obliges him to, that other People will be apt to fancy *Silly* and *Ridiculous*. But this doth not at all reflect upon *Religion*; nor doth it follow, that because the *Imprudence* of this or the other Particular Man, exposes him to the *Mirth* and the *Pleasantness* of others, that therefore all *Religious Persons* must fall under the same *Fate*. Most certainly *Religion*, wherever it is governed by *Knowledge* and *sound Principles*, wherever it is managed with *Prudence* and *Discretion*, is a thing so *Noble*, so *Amiable*, that it attracts

Love,

Love, and command *Reſpect* from all that are acquainted with it, unleſs they be ſuch profligately wicked Perſons as I juſt now ſpoke of.

There is one *Objection* made from the *Scripture* againſt this and the former *Point* I have been ſpeaking to, which I deſire to remove, before I proceed to the *third* General Head of my Diſcourſe. It is this: That the Scripture is ſo far from repreſenting *Godlineſs* as a means to *Improve our Fortunes*, or *attain a Reputation in the World*, that it ſeems directly to affirm the contrary; for it aſſures us, that *All thoſe that will live godly in Chriſt muſt ſuffer Perſecution. That the Diſciples of Chriſt ſhall be Hated of All Men for His Names ſake.* That *the World ſhall revile and perſecute them, and ſpeak all manner of Evil of them*; and that *through many Tribulations we muſt enter into the Kingdom of God.*

But to this it is eaſily anſwered, that theſe and other ſuch like Paſſages of *Scripture* do not ſpeak the *General* and *Common* Fate that attends Godlineſs in all *times* and *places* of the World, according to the *Ordinary* courſe of God's Providence; but only refer to that *particular Time*, when *Chriſtianity* was to be planted in the World; then, indeed, *Perſecution* and *Diſgrace*, loſs of *Goods*, and even of *Life* it ſelf, was to be the common portion of thoſe that profeſſed it: nor could it otherwiſe be expected; for, when a new *Religion* is to be ſet up, and ſuch a Religion as is perfectly *deſtructive* of all thoſe others that have been by long *cuſtom* received, and are by *Laws* eſtabliſhed in the World, It cannot be imagined but that it will meet with a great deal of Contradiction and Oppoſition from all ſorts of perſons. But this was a peculiar and extraordinary caſe, and could but laſt for a certain time; now that Chriſtianity hath obtained in the World, and is adopted into the Laws of Kingdoms, as God be thanked it is among us at this day: ſo far need

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we be from fearing that the practice of it will draw upon us any *Perſecution*, or ſuch other Inconveniences as are mentioned in the fore-cited places, that there is no doubt but that we may Rationally expect from it all thoſe *External* Benefits and Advantages, which as we have ſeen it is in its own nature apt to produce, and which God hath indeed made over to it by *Promiſe*, in ſeveral Paſſages of the Scripture, eſpecially of the Old Teſtament.

For that I may mention this by the By, I do not conceive that thoſe Promiſes of *Long Life*, *Good Days*, and all manner of Worldly *Proſperity*, with which the Practice of *Godlineſs* is ſo frequently enforced in the *Old Teſtament*, were ſo appropriated to the *Jewiſh* Religion, as to be antiquated or diſannulled by the Introduction of the *Chriſtian*; but rather that they are ſtill in force to all the Purpoſes they were then: For that the coming of *Chriſt* into the World did add many great *Bleſſings* and *Priviledges* to the People of God, which before they had not, we are certain of: but that it *took away* from them any that before they had, this we no where read, nor indeed is it probable.

But I haſten to the third and laſt general Head I am to ſpeak to, which is the *Excellent Miniſteries of Religion above all other things, to the Pleaſures of Humane Life*: which point, if it be clearly made out, I do not ſee what can be further wanting to recommend it unto us, as the moſt effectual Inſtrument for the ſerving all our turns in this World. Now that Godlineſs doth indeed make the moſt excellent Proviſions for all ſorts of Pleaſures, will appear by theſe four Conſiderations.

Firſt, That it eminenly miniſtreth to *Health*, which is a neceſſary Foundation for all *Pleaſures*.

Secondly, It doth much increaſe the *Reliſh* and *Sweetneſs* of all our other *Pleaſures*.

Thirdly,

Thirdly, It ſecures us from all thoſe *Inquietudes* and *Diſturbances* which are apt to *embitter* our *Pleaſures*, and make our Lives uncomfortable.

Fourthly, It adds to *Humane Life* a World of *Pleaſures* of its own, which thoſe that are not poſſeſſed of it, are utterly unacquainted with.

Firſt of all, *Godlineſs doth very much conduce to Health*, which is ſo neceſſary to our enjoyment of any *ſenſible Good*, that without it, neither *Riches*, nor *Honours*, nor any thing that we eſteem moſt gratifying to our Senſes will ſignifie any thing at all to us. Now that a *Sound* and *Healthful Conſtitution* doth exceedingly much depend upon a diſcreet government and moderation of our Appetites and Paſſions, upon a ſober and temperate uſe of all Gods Creatures, which is an *eſſential* Part of *True Religion*, is a thing ſo evident, that I need make no words about it. What are moſt of our *Diſeaſes* and *Infirmities* that make us miſerable and unpittied while we live, and cut us off in the midſt of our days, and tranſmit Weakneſs and Rottenneſs to our *Poſterity*, but the effects of our *Exceſſes* and *Debauches*, our *Wantonneſs* and *Luxury*? Certainly, if we would obſerve thoſe Meaſures in our *Diet* and in our *Labours*, in our *Paſſions* and in our *Pleaſures* which Religion has bound us up to, we might to ſuch a degree *Preſerve* our *Bodies*, as to render the greateſt Part of *Phyſick* perfectly ſuperfluous. But theſe things are too well known to need to be inſiſted on. I therefore paſs on to the next thing,

Secondly, *A Life of Religion doth very much increaſe the reliſh and ſweetneſs* of all our *ſenſible Enjoyments*. So far is it from abridging us of any of our earthly delights (as its Enemies ſlanderouſly repreſent it) that it abundantly heightens them. It doth not only indulge to us the free Uſe of all thoſe good Creatures of God which he hath made for the Support and Comfort of Mankind, while they are in theſe

Earthly

Earthly Bodies; but alſo makes them more exquiſitely gratifying and delightful than without it they could poſſibly be. And this it doth in part by the means of that never ſufficiently commended Temperance and Moderation I before ſpoke of: for hereby it comes to paſs that our *Senſes*, which are the Inſtruments of our Pleaſures are always preſerved in that due Purity and Quickneſs, that is abſolutely neceſſary for the right performing of their *Offices*, and the rendering our Perceptions of any thing grateful and agreeable. Whereas the *Senſual* and *Voluptuous* Man defeats his own deſigns, and whilſt he thinks to enjoy a *greater* ſhare of *Pleaſures* than other Men, really enjoys a *leſs*. For his Diſſoluteneſs and giving up the reins to his Appetites only ſerves to dull and ſtupifie them. Nor doth he reap any other Benefit from his continual hankering after *Bodily Pleaſures*, but that his *Senſations* of them are hereby made altogether *Flat* and *Unaffecting*. Neither is his *Meat* half ſo ſavoury, nor his *Recreations* ſo diverting, nor his *Sleep* ſo ſweet, nor the *Company* he keeps ſo agreeable as *Theirs* are, that by following the meaſures of *Nature* and *Reaſon*, come to them with *truer* and more *unforc'd* Appetites.

But beſides this, there is a certain *Lightſomneſs* and *Chearfulneſs* of mind, which is in a manner *peculiar* to the truly *Religious* Soul, that above all things *ſets off* our *Pleaſures*, and makes all the *Actions* and *Perceptions* of Humane Life *Sweet* and *Delightful*. True *Piety* is the beſt Cure of *Melancholy* in the World; nothing comparable to it for diſpelling that *Lumpiſhneſs* and *Inactivity*, that renders the Soul of a Man uncapable of enjoying either it ſelf or any thing elſe. It fills the Soul with perpetual *Light* and *Vigour*, infuſeth a ſtrange kind of *Alacrity* and *Gaiety* of Humour into us. And this it doth not only by removing thoſe things that *Hinder* our Mirth, and make us languiſh in the midſt of our Feſtivities, (ſuch as are the Pangs of an Evil *Conſcience*, and

the ſtorms of unmortified *Paſſions*, of which I ſhall ſpeak in the following particular) but even by a more *Phyſical Efficiency*. It hath really a mighty Power to *Correct* and *Exalt* a Mans *Natural* Temper. Thoſe Ardent Breathings and Workings wherewith the Pious Soul is continually carried out after God and Virtue, are to the Body like ſo much *Freſh Air* and *Wholſom Exerciſe*, they *Fan* the *Blood*, and keep it from *Setling*; they *Clariſie* the *Spirits*, and purge them from thoſe groſſer *Feculencies* which would otherwiſe *Cloud* our *Underſtandings*, and make us *dull* and *liſtleſs*. And to theſe effects of *Religion* doth *Solomon* ſeem to allude, when he tells us, that *Wiſdom maketh a mans face to ſhine*, Eccleſ. 8. 1.

Where he ſeems to intimate, that that *Purity* and *Exaltation* into which the *Blood* and *Spirits* of a Man are wrought by the Exerciſe of Virtue and Devotion, doth diffuſe it ſelf even to his *Outward Viſage*, making the *Countenance* clear, and ſerene, and filling the *Eyes* with an unuſual kind of Splendor and Vivacity. But whether this be a true Comment on his words or no, certain it is, that *Piety* diſpoſeth a Man to *Mirth* and *Lightneſs* of Heart above all things in the World: and how admirable a *Reliſh* this doth give to all our other *Pleaſures* and *Enjoyments* there is none but can eaſily diſcern.

Thirdly, Let it be further conſidered, that *Godlineſs* is a moſt Effectual *Antidote* againſt all thoſe *Inquietudes*, and *Evil Accidents*, that do either wholly *deſtroy*, or very much *embitter* the *Pleaſures* of this Life.

For whilſt it teacheth us to place all our Happineſs in *God Almighty* and *our ſelves* only, whilſt we have learn'd to bring all our Affections and Paſſions, our Deſires and Averſions, our Hopes and Fears, under the command of our *Reaſon*, and endeavour not ſo much to ſuit *Things* to our *Wills*,

Wills, as our *Wills* to *Things*; being Indifferent to all Events that can happen, ſave only that we always judge thoſe Beſt which God in his Providence ſends us. Being, I ſay, thus diſpoſed (as certainly Religion, if it be ſuffered to have its perfect work upon us, will thus diſpoſe us,) what is it that ſhall be able to diſturb or interrupt our *Pleaſures*, or create any Trouble or Vexation to us? Our *Preſent Enjoyments* will not be *Embittered* with the fear of loſing them, or *leſſened* by our Impatient Longing after *Greater*. Our *Brains* will not be upon the *Rack* for Compaſſing things that are perhaps Impoſſible, nor our *Bodies* under the Scourge of *Rage* and *Anger* for every Diſappointment. We ſhall not look pale with *Envy* that our *Neighbours* have that which *we* have not, nor pine away with *Grief* if we ſhould happen to loſe that which we have.

But the *Vicious* Man is expoſed to all theſe Miſeries, and a thouſand more; He carries that within him, which will perpetually fret and torment him, for he is a *Slave* to his *Paſſions*; and the leaſt of them, when it is let looſe upon him, is the *Worſt* of *Tyrants*. He is like the *Troubled Sea*, reſtleſs and ever working, rifled and diſcompoſed with every thing. He is not capable of being rendred ſo much as *Tolerably Happy* by the beſt Condition this World affords: For having ſuch a World of Impetuous *Deſires* and *Appetites* which muſt all be *ſatisfied*, or elſe he is miſerable; and there being ſuch an infinite number of *Circumſtances* that muſt concur to the giving them that *Satisfaction*: And all theſe depending upon *Things without him*, which are perfectly out of his Power, it cannot be avoided but he will continually find matter to diſquiet him, and render his condition troubleſome and uneaſie: a thouſand unforeſeen Accidents will ever be croſſing his Deſigns. Nor will there be wanting ſome little Thing or other, almoſt hourly to put him out of Humour.

And if this be the Case of the *Vicious* Man, in the *Best Circumstances* of this World (where the Causes of Vexation are in a manner undiscernable) in what a miserable Condition must he needs be, under those more *Real Afflictions* unto which Humane Life is obnoxious? what is there that shall be able to support his Spirit under the Tediousness of a *Lingering Sickness*, or the Anguish of an *Acute Pain*? What is become of all his Mirth and Jollity, if there should happen a *Turn* in His *Fortune*, if he should fall into *Disgrace*, or his Friends forsake him, or the Means of maintaining his Pleasures fail him, and the miserable Man become *Poor* and *Despised*? Not to mention a great many more Evils, which will make him uncapable of any Consolation, eat into the Heart of his best Enjoyments, and become *Gall* and *Wormwood* to his choicest Delicacies.

And has he not now, think you, made *admirable* Provisions for his *Pleasures*? Has he not done himself a wonderful Piece of Service, by freeing himself from the *Drudgery* as he calls it, of Virtue and Religion? Alas, *Poor Man!* this is the only Thing that would now have secured him from all these sad *Accidents* and *Displeasures*. The *Good Man* sits above the *Reach* of *Fortune*, and in spite of all the Vicissitudes and Uncertainties of this *Lower World*, with which other Men are continually Alarm'd, enjoys a Constant and Undisturbed Peace. Those *Evils* that may be *Avoided*, (and really a great many which afflict mortal Men, are such) he by his Prudent Conduct and Government of himself wholly prevents. And those that are *Unavoidable*, he takes by such a *Handle*, that they have no power to do him any *Harm*: For he is indeed possessed of that which the *Alchymists* in vain seek for: Such a *Sovereign Art* he has, that he can turn the *Basest Metals* into *Gold*, make such an use of the *worst Accidents* that can befal him, that they shall not be accounted his *Miseries*, but his *Enjoyments*. So that however

ever the varieties of his Condition may occasion a *change* in his *Pleasures*, yet can they never cause any *Loss* or *Destruction* of them.

And this security he enjoys, not as some of the *Stoicks* of old pretended to do, by an Imaginary *Insensibility*, or by changing the *names* of *Things*, calling that *no Evil* which Really is one: but by an absolute Resignation of himself to the will of *God*, and an Hearty acquiescing in his wise Providence. He is certain there is a God that governs the World, and that nothing happens to him, but by his Order and Appointment. And he is certain also that this God hath a Real kindness for him, and would not dispense any Event unto him, but what is really for his Good and Advantage. And these thoughts so support his Spirit, that he not only bears patiently, but thanks God for what ever happens to him. And instead of Fretting and Complaining that things succeed otherwise than he expected, he resolves with himself that that Condition, whatever it be, in which he actually is, is indeed best for him; and that which he himself, were he to be the Carver of his Fortunes, supposing him but truly to understand his own Concernments, would chuse for himself above all others.

But further, besides this security from *Outward Disturbances* which our virtue obtains for us, there is another *Evil* which it also delivers us from, with which the wicked Man is almost perpetually haunted, and which seldom suffers him to enjoy any sincere, unmingled Pleasure. That which I mean is the *Pangs* of an *Evil Conscience*, the Fears, the Restlesness, the Confusion, the Amazements that arise in his Soul from the sense of his Crimes, and the just Apprehensions of the shame and vengeance that doth await them, possibly in this Life, but most certainly in the Life to come.

How Happy, how Prosperous soever the Sinner be as to his

his other Affairs, yet these Furies he shall be sure to be plagued with: no pompousness of Condition, no costly Entertainments, no noise of Company will be able to drive them away. Every Man that is wicked cannot but know that he is so, and that very Knowledge is a Principle of perpetual Anguish and Disquietude. Be his Crimes never so secret, yet he cannot be confident they will always continue so: and the very Apprehension of this makes him feel all the Shame and Amazement of a present Discovery. But put the case he hath had the good luck to sin so closely, or in such a nature that he need fear nothing from *Men*; yet he knows there is an Offended *God* to whom he hath a sad and a fearful Reckoning to make, a God too *Just* to be Bribed, too *Mighty* to be Over-awed, too *Wise* to be Imposed upon. And is not *the Man*, think you, under such Reflections as these likely to live a very *Comfortable life*? Ah, none knows the *Bitterness* of them but himself that feels them. To the Judgment of others he perhaps appears a very happy Man, he hath the World at his beck, all things seem to conspire to make him a great *Example* of *Prosperity*, we admire, we applaud his Condition. But ah, we know not how sad a heart he often carries under this fair Out-side: we know not with what sudden Damps his spirit is often struck, even in the heighth of his Revellings. We know not how unquiet, how broken his sleeps are, how oft he starts and looks pale; when the Wife that lies by his side understands not what the matter is with him.

He doth indeed endeavour all he can to stifle his Cares, and to stop the mouth of his Conscience. He thinks to *divert* it with *Business*, or to *flatter* it with little *Sophistries*, or to *drown* it with *rivers* of *Wine*, or to *calm* it with *soft* and *gentle Airs*. And he is indeed sometimes so successful in these Arts as for a while to lay it asleep. But alas this is no lasting peace, the least thing awakens it, even the sound of a *Passing-*

a *Passing-Bell*, or a *clap* of *Thunder*; nay, a Frightful *Dream*, or a *Melancholy Story* hath the power to do it, and then the poor Man returns to his Torment.

And now judge you, whether the Honest and Virtuous Man that is free from all these Agonies, that is at Peace with *God*, and at Peace with his own *Conscience*; that apprehends nothing terrible from the *one*, nor feels any thing troublesome from the *other*, but is safe from *Himself* and from all the *world* in his own Innocence: Judge, I say, whether such a one hath not laid to himself *better* and *surer Foundations* for *Pleasures* and a happy Life, than the man that by indulging his *Lusts* and *Vices*, only breeds up a *Snake* in his *Bosom*, which will not cease to *Sting* and *Gall* him beyond what a Tongue is able to express, or a *witty Cruelty* to invent.

Fourthly and lastly, besides the benefits of *Religion* for *removing* the *hinderances* of our *Pleasures*; it also adds to Humane Life a world of *Pleasures* of its own, which vicious men are utterly unacquainted with.

And these are of so excellent a kind, so delicious, so enravishing, that the highest gratifications of sense, are not comparable to them. Never till we come to be heartily Religious do we understand what *true Pleasure* is. That which ariseth from the grateful motions that are made in our outward senses, is but a *faint shadow*, a *meer dream* of it. Then do we begin to enjoy *true Pleasures* indeed when our Highest and Divinest Faculties, which were wholly laid asleep while we lived the life of sense, begin to be awakened, and to exercise themselves upon their proper objects, when we become acquainted with God, and the Infinite Abyss of *Good* that is in him; when our hearts are made sensible of the great Love and good will he bears us; and in that sense are powerfully carried out in Joy and Love,

and

and desire after him: When we feel the *Divine Nature* daily more and more displayed in our souls, shewing forth it self in the blessed Fruits of Charity and Peaceableness, and Meekness, and Humility, and Purity, and Devotion, and all the other Graces of the Holy Spirit. It is not possible but that such a Life as this must needs be a Fountain of inexpressible Joy to him that leads it, and fill the Soul with transcendently greater content than any thing upon earth can possibly do: For this is the Life of God, this is the Life of the Blessed Angels above, this is the Life that is most of all agreeable to our own natures. While we live thus, things are with us as they should be; our Souls are in their natural Posture, in that state they were framed and designed to live in: whereas the Life of Sin is a state of Disorder and Confusion; a perpetual violence and force upon our Natures. While we live thus, we enjoy the *Pleasures* of *Men*, whereas before when we were governed by sense, we could pretend to no other satisfactions but what the *Brutes* have as well as we. In this state of life we gratifie our *Highest* and *Noblest* Powers, the intellectual Appetites of our Souls; which as they are infinitely capacious, so have they an infinite good to fill them: whereas in the sensual Life, the *meanest*, the *dullest*, and the *most contracted* Faculties of our Souls were only provided for.

But what need I carry you out into these *Speculations*, when your own *sense* and *experience* will ascertain you in this matter above a thousand Arguments. Do but seriously set your selves to *serve God*, if you have yet never done it, do but once try what it is to live up to the Precepts of *Reason*, and *Virtue*, and *Religion*; and I dare confidently pronounce that you will in *one month* find more *Joy*, more *Peace*, more *Content*, to arise in your spirits, from the sense that you have resisted the Temptations of Evil, and done what

what was your duty to do, than in *many years* ſpent in Vanity and a Licentious courſe of living. I doubt not in the leaſt, but that after you have once *ſeen* and *taſted how gracious the Lord is*, how good all his ways are, but you will proclaim to all the world, that *One day ſpent in his Courts is better than a thouſand:* Nay, you will be ready to cry out with the *Roman Orator* (if it be lawful to quote the Teſtimony of a *Heathen*, after that of the *Divine* Pſalmiſt) that *One day lived according to the Precepts of Virtue is to be preferred before an Immortality of Sin.*

You will then alter all your ſentiments of things, and wonder that you ſhould have been ſo ſtrangely abuſed by falſe repreſentations of Virtue and Vice. You will then ſee that Religion is quite another thing than it appeared to you before you became acquainted with it. Inſtead of that grim, ſowre, unpleaſant Countenance in which you heretofore painted her to your ſelf, you will then diſcover nothing in her but what is infinitely Lovely and Charming. Thoſe very Actions of Religion which you now cannot think upon with Patience, they ſeem ſo harſh and unpleaſant, you will then find to be accompanied with a wonderful Delight. You will not then complain of the *narrowneſs* of the *Bounds*, or the *ſcantineſs* of the *Meaſures* that it hath confined your deſires to; for you will then find, that you have hereby gained an entrance into a far greater and more perfect *Liberty*. How ungentilely, how much againſt the *grain* of *Nature* ſoever it now looks to *forgive* an *Injury*, or an *Affront*; you will then find it to be as far more eaſie, ſo far more ſweet than to revenge one. You will no longer think works of *Charity* burdenſome or expenſive; or that to do good Offices to every one is an employment too mean for you; for you will then experience that there is no ſenſuality like that of *doing good*, and that it is a greater pleaſure to *do* a kindneſs than to *receive* one. How will you chide your ſelf for

having been so averse to *Prayer* and other *devout Exercises*, accounting them as tiresome unsavoury things; when you begin to feel the delicious Relishes they leave upon your Spirit? You will then confess that no Conversation is half so agreeable as that which we enjoy with God Almighty in Prayer; no Cordial so reviving as heartily to pour out our Souls unto him. And then to be affected with his *Mercies*, to praise and give thanks to him for his Benefits, what is it but a very *Heaven* upon *Earth*, an anticipation of the Joys of Eternity? Nay, you will not be without your pleasures even in the very *entrance* of *Religion*, then when you exercise acts of *Repentance*, when you *mourn* and *afflict* your self for your sins, which seems the frightfullest thing in all Religion. For such is the nature of that holy sorrow, that you would not for all the World be without it, and you will find far greater Contentment and satisfaction in *grieving* for your *Offences*, than ever you did receive from the *Committing* them.

But, O the ineffable Pleasures that do continually spring up in the heart of a good Man, from the sense of Gods Love, and the hope of his Favour, and the fair prospect he hath of the Joy and Happiness of the other World! How pleasing, how transporting will the thought of these things be to you! To think that you are one of those happy Souls that are of an Enemy become the Friend of God, that your ways please him, and that you are not only *Pardoned*, but *Accepted* and *Beloved* by him: to think that you a *poor Creature* who were of your self nothing, and by your sins had made your self far worse than nothing, are yet by the goodness of your Saviour become so *considerable* a *Being*, as to be able to give delight to the King of the World, and to *cause joy in Heaven among the Blessed Angels by your Repentance*: to think that God charges his Providence with you, takes care of all your Concerns, hears all your Prayers, provides

all

all things needful for you, and that he will in his good time take you up unto himself, to live everlastingly in his Presence, to be partaker of his Glories, to be ravished with his Love, to be acquainted with his Counsels, to know and be known by *Angels*, *Archangels*, and *Seraphims*; to enjoy a Conversation with *Prophets*, *Apostles*, and *Martyrs*, and all the *Raised* and *Glorified Spirits* of Brave *Men*; and with all these to spend a happy and a rapturous Eternity, in Adoring, in Loving, in Praising God for the Infiniteness of his Wisdom, and the Miracles of his Mercy and Goodness to all his Creatures. Can there be any *Pleasure* like this? Can any thing in the World put you into such an *Ecstasie* of *Joy* as the very *thought* of these things? With what a mighty scorn and contempt will you in the sense of them look down upon all the little Gauderies and sickly Satisfactions that the Men of this World keep such a stir about! How empty and evanid, how flat and unsavoury will the best Pleasures on Earth appear to you in comparison of these Divine Contentments? You will perpetually rejoyce, you will sing Praises to your Saviour, you will bless the day that ever you became acquainted with him; you will confess him to be the only master of Pleasure in the World, and that you never knew what it was to be an *Epicure* indeed, till you became a *Christian*.

Thus have I gone through all those Heads which I at first proposed to insist on. What now remains but that I resume the *Apostle's Exhortation* with which I begun this Discourse, that since as you have seen, *Godliness is so exceedingly profitable to all the purposes of this Life, as well as the other*; since, as you have seen, *Length of days is in her right hand, and in her left hand riches and honour*; and *all her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace*: you would all be perswaded seriously to *Apply your selves* to the *exercise* of it. Which that you may do, *God of his*, &c.

FINIS.

Books Written by the Most Reverend Father in God, John *Lord Archbishop of* York: *and Printed for* Walter Kettilby, *at the Bishop's-Head in* St Paul's *Church-Yard.*

A Discourse concerning Conscience; The first Part; wherein an account is given of the Nature, and Rule, and Obligation of it. And the case of those who separate from the Communion of the Church of *England*, as by Law established, upon this pretence, that it is against their Conscience to join in it, is stated and discussed.

A Discourse of Conscience: The second Part; concerning a doubting Conscience.

A Sermon before the Lord Mayor and Court of Aldermen, *Aug.* 23. 1674. on *Rom.* xiv. 19.

A Sermon before the Lord Mayor and Court of Aldermen, *Jan.* 31. 1675. on 1 *Tim.* iv. 8.

A Fast-Sermon before the House of Commons, *April* 11. 1679. on *Revel.* ii. 5.

The Duty and Happiness of doing good, in two Sermons, the former Preached at the *Yorkshire* Feast, *Feb.* 17. 1679. on *Eccl.* iii. 10. the other before the Lord Mayor at the *Spittle*, *Apr.* 14. 1680. on 1 *Tim.* vi. 17, 18, 19.

A Sermon at the Election of the Lord Mayor, *Sept.* 29. 1680. on *Psal.* cxii. 4.

A Lent-Sermon at *Whitehal*, *March* 20. 1684. on *Luke* xvi. 31.

A Sermon before the Queen at *Whitehall*, *Apr.* 11. 1690. on *Gal.* v. 13.

A Fast-Sermon before the Honourable House of Commons, *May* 21. 1690. on *Deut.* v. 29.

A Sermon on the 28. of *June*, at St. *Giles* in the Fields, at the leaving that Parish, on *Phil.* iv. 8.

A

SERMON

Preached on the Day of the

Public Fast,

April the 11th. 1679.

AT

St. *Margarets Westminster*;

BEFORE THE

Honourable House of Commons.

BY

JOHN SHARP, Rector of St. *Giles* in the Fields, and Chaplain to the Right Honourable *Heneage* Lord *Finch*, Lord High Chancellor of *England*.

Published by Order of the House.

LONDON:
Printed by *M. C.* for *Walter Kettilby*, at the Bishops Head in St. *Pauls* Church-Yard. 1679.

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A SERMON ON

Revel. ii. 5.

—I will come unto thee quickly and will remove thy Candleſtick out of his place, except thou repent.

WE are this day met together to humble ourſelves for our ſins before God, and to implore his mercy to this Nation, in the Preſerving our *King*, our *Laws*, our *Religion* and our *Lives*, and in Bleſſing the preſent Publick Counſels in order thereunto.

And never was a work of this nature more ſeaſonable or more neceſſary than at this time, and to us of this Kingdom: For as our *ſins* were never greater, never cried louder to Heaven for Vengeance, ſo the *Judgments* they deſerve did never more viſibly threaten us than they do at

this Day. Insomuch that if our circumstances be duly considered, we may have just reason to apprehend, that our Saviour in the *way* of his *Providence* does now speak to the *People* and *Church* of *England* the same words, that he ordered St. *John* by the *way* of *Letter* to speak to the *Church* of *Ephesus*. *Remember from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works, or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy Candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.*

This Church of *Ephesus*, as also the other six Churches of *Asia*, to each of which St. *John* by the command of our Saviour doth here address a several Epistle, were at the time when these Letters were dictated very flourishing Churches, favoured as much with the especial presence and influence of Christ, as ever any Churches were.

This appears from the Preface to this Epistle in the first Verse of this Chapter, wherein Christ the Author of the Epistle is described, as *holding the seven Stars in his right hand, and walking in the midst of the seven Golden Candlesticks.*

Cap. i. 20. The *seven Stars* are the *Angels* of the *seven Churches* as he himself Interprets them, that is, according to the sence of all Antiquity, The *Bishops* the *Presidents*, the *Governours* of those Churches. His *holding them in his hand*, is his supporting and directing them for the good of the people.

people. The *seven Golden Candlesticks* in the midst of which he walked, are, as he himself likewise expounds them, the *seven Churches* themselves, as being the places where those *Stars*, those *Lights* did shine. And his *walking among those Candlesticks* is his presence in those Churches, Encouraging or Reproving, Rewarding or Punishing the members of them as there was cause, having the power in his hands, either to continue those Lights among them, or to remove them to another place. Ibid.

I insist on the Explication of this passage, because it lets us *in to* the meaning of the phrase that we meet with in the Text of *removing the Candlestick out of its place*, which from hence we plainly see to be the *Un-Churching* any people, the withdrawing the Light of the Gospel from them.

Well, But this Church of *Ephesus* to which the Epistle I am now concerned in was written, how much soever Christ had done for them, had it seems made but a bad requital of his kindnesses. At first indeed they had walked very worthily, and are much commended by our Saviour, for their *Zeal* and *Piety* and *Labour* in *Religion*, but now they were fallen to a great degree of negligence and remissness. Cap. ii. 2, 3.

It is true they at this time continued Orthodox in their *Doctrines* and *Opinions*, they did both

know and profess the true Religion, and were Zealous against false Doctrines, which also our Saviour takes notice of and commends them for,

V. 6. *This*, saith he, *thou hast, That thou hatest the deeds of the* Nicolaitans *which I also hate*, but yet notwithstanding, so offended was he with the *Loss of their first Love*, the decay of *Devotion* and *Charity* among them, that he threatens them solemnly in the Text, *That if they did not repent, and do the first works, he would remove their Candlestick out of its place*, that is, as I said, he would withdraw from them his *presence* and the *Light* of his *Gospel*.

This is a brief account of my Text as to the first design and litteral meaning of it, that is, as it concerns the Church of *Ephesus*. I now desire leave to make such Application of it to ourselves as may be subservient to the ends designed in the Solemnity of this Day.

And we have warrant enough to make such an *Application*; for let us not flatter ourselves, what is here *Reproved*, and what is here *Threatened*, hath not such a peculiar respect to the particular Church of *Ephesus*, but that it doth equally concern all Churches so far as they fall under the same Character. Which whether we at this day day do or no, it is fit we should seriously examine ourselves about.

Here are three things considerable in the Text. *First*,

Firſt, a great *Sin*, and *Guilt*, ſuppoſed. *Secondly*, a great *Judgment* denounced for that *Guilt*, no leſs than the *Un-Churching* of that people that had contracted it. *Thirdly*, the means preſcribed for the averting that Judgment, *viz. Repentance.*

My Application of the Text ſhall proceed upon the ſame Heads, that is,

I ſhall *firſt* deſire leave to enquire, whether we of this Nation, at this day, for our manifold *ſins* and *guilt*, may not be judged to be in as bad or worſe circumſtances than the Church of *Epheſus* in the Text, and conſequently have not juſt reaſon to fear the ſame *Judgment* that they are here threatned with.

Secondly, I ſhall conſider the *Judgment* here threatened, how grievous a one it is, and conſequently how great an argument the conſideration of it ought to be to us all to *Repent.*

Thirdly, I ſhall ſpeak ſomthing of this *Repentance* how it ought to be expreſt, if we would thereby prevent the *Judgment.*

I begin with the firſt of theſe points, which concerns our *ſin* and our *guilt*, to make ſome repreſentation of the *Spiritual Maladies* and Diſeaſes that this Nation groans under, thoſe *publick grievances* by which the Holy Spirit of God is provoked to withdraw himſelf from us, and to give us up to the Power and Dominion of other Maſters.

This

This I must confess, is a very melancholy and unpleasing Argument, but yet very necessary to be insisted on, and that very freely too: especially upon such an occasion as this; and most of all, when I speak to those whose Concernment, and whose Care it is to inspect these Matters, and from whom we hope for a Cure of our Distempers.

It is here taken notice of the Church of *Ephesus* to her commendation, that she retained the truth *of the Christian Doctrine* in opposition to the *Heresies* of those times, and this, God be thanked, may be spoke of us at this day, we are not much degenerated from the purity of Christianity as to Doctrinals. Our Church may vie with all the Churches in the world, for Orthodoxy and Conformity to the Primitive Church in matters of Faith.

And, blessed be Gods Name, this Light is not put under a Bushel. There is perhaps no Church since the Apostles time wherein the *Divine-Truth* hath been more publickly and more purely taught, or the *Sacraments* more rightly and duely Administred than among us, and no Church wherein *Knowledg* has more abounded among all the members of it than it does now in Ours.

But the thing that is charged upon the Church of *Ephesus*, is their corruption in Manners, and this is the point we are now concerned in, and which

which tis fit the whole Nation ſhould examine themſelves upon, and deeply lay to heart.

Though we ſtill keep up the *form* of *Godlineſs*, yet have we not in a great meaſure loſt the *power* thereof? Though the Principles which our Church *Owneth* and *Profeſſeth* be excellently good; Yet do not many of us horribly contradict them in our *Practices?* Is there not a viſible decay of Chriſtian Piety to be obſerved among us, and a Deluge of Vice and Wickedneſs of all ſorts overſpreading the face of the Land?

I ſpeak not here of the faults of this or the other particular perſon, for we know there was never any Age nor any Religion that was free from ſuch, but I ſpeak of the National ſins, the reigning Vices of the Times, the miſcarriages that are ſo prevailing and ſo common that a publick guilt is contracted by them, and the whole people may juſtly ſhare in the puniſhment of them.

I muſt confeſs, to ſpeak ſtrictly, the Degrees and Proportions in which any Age grows better or worſe than thoſe that went before it, are not eaſily to be meaſured, unleſs we could live the ſpace of ſeveral Ages, and out of our own experience make obſervations and remarks upon them. All that we have to make our eſtimate by, is the Hiſtories and Records that are left us of the ſtate of former Ages with which we may com-

compare our own; But yet this way is often very fallacious, becauſe it is the common humour and cuſtom of men, even of thoſe that tranſmit the Memoires of their own Times to Poſterity, ſtill to complain of their own Times moſt, and to prefer the former Ages before that in which they live.

Upon this conſideration I ſhall not be forward to draw a compariſon between the former times and ours in order to the ſhewing how much greater our *ſins* are than of thoſe that went before us, and conſequently how much riper we are now for *Judgment*.

Moſt certain it is, That God, as he has done to the Sea, ſo has he to every Nation, *ſet its bounds* of wickedneſs *beyond which they ſhall not paſs*; and when their iniquities are at full he will not fail to repay vengeance into their Boſom. The *Canaanites*, the *Jews*, and many other Nations I might name have been ſad inſtances of this kind of proceeding.

But when a Nation is come to that Fatal Period none knows but God, and whether we are not already very near it we cannot tell, but we ought infinitely to fear.

Too evident it is, that things are in a very bad poſture among us, and our ſins are grown to that height, that it is a Miracle of the Divine patience and long-ſuffering that we are

not

not already consumed. Let us be more particular.

If the prevailing of *Atheism* in a Land, and the contempt of God and Religion:

If open *Lewdness* and *Debauchery*, and *Immorality* of all kinds:

If the turning *Religion* into a mere piece of *Formality*, and *outward profession*:

If *Schisms* and *Divisions* and *Factions* in a Church:

And lastly, if our general *Unthankfulness* for and *Unprofitableness* under the means of Grace, and the many mercies and privileges that have been vouchsafed us.

If any or all of these sins can provoke God to forsake a Nation and give it up to ruin (and yet these sins are both in the Scripture, and by the ordinary course of Gods providence especially markt out for such) then are we of this Nation at this time in a very deplorable condition, and are to expect Judgment without Mercy, unless it be prevented by a speedy Reformation.

For *first* of all, was there ever more *Atheism* and *Irreligion* in a *Christian* Nation, at least in a *Protestant Christian* Nation; or more countenance given to such *Doctrines* and *Opinions* as directly tend thereto than now among us!

There are not many perhaps that dare in expreſs terms affirm *That there is no God*, becauſe they know it is not ſafe ſo to do: But many affirm it by conſequence, by aſſerting ſuch Principles from whence it muſt neceſſarily be concluded.

For what is the conſequence of ſuch Doctrines as theſe; That there is nothing but *Body* in the world, and that the very Notion of a *Spiritual Incorporeal* Being implies a contradiction; That there is nothing *Juſt* or *Unjuſt*, *Virtuous* or *Vitious* in itſelf, but as it is made ſo by the Laws of the Kingdom. That all things come to paſs by a *Fatal Neceſſity*, and that no man is ſo *free* an *Agent* as to be capable of Rewards and Puniſhments for his Actions: What is the reſult of theſe Doctrines, but the neceſſary introducing of *Atheiſm* and the baniſhing *Religion* from among men? It being upon theſe Principles, not only a needleſs impertinent, but an abſurd contradictious thing.

And yet are not theſe the avowed Principles of too many among us, and thoſe too that are the great pretenders to *Reaſon* and *Philoſophy*?

But what has been the effect of ſuch *Philoſophy*? Why ſuitable enough to the Notions of it. You may meet with thoſe that make no ſcruple to ſcoff at God and every thing that relates to the other world, and to turn into *Ridicule* every thing that

that is Sacred. And he is accounted the *Great Spirit* that *thinks* freely, and dares *speak* boldly what he *thinks*. And if a man will set up for a *Wit* he cannot take a more effectual course to gain him that Reputation in many Companies, than to be confident and peremptory in contradicting the common Sentiments of men as to *Religion*, To be able to *Burlesque* the Scriptures humorously, To be dexterous in imploying Religious Phrases to Scurrilous Purposes, and to Baffle and Droll out of countenance those that stand up for the Reputation of Sacred things.

As the world goes, it is a piece of *virtue* to believe a God and Providence, and future Rewards and Punishments, with the other Principles of Natural Religion; They do very well that go thus far. But as for *Instituted Reveald* Religion, for instance *Christianity*, How many are there that think themselves no way concerned in it, but hold it in the same rank with *Judaism* and *Mahometanism*? And if they profess *that* rather than either of *these*, it is only because they were born and bred up in it; It is the *Religion* of the *Country* where they live; but if either of the other should be set up in the place of it, they would as willingly conform to that.

One would think that such men as these should not be found in a *Country* that calls itself *Christian*, much less in a *Christian Country* that calls itself *Re-*

formed; And yet such is the *infelicity* and the *fault* of ours, that men of these Principles and Practices do abound among us. O Blessed God! Whither shall we come at last if timely care be not taken of these things?

But *Secondly*, If to the *Atheism* and *Infidelity* that reigns among us we add the open *Prophaneness* and *Debauchery* that is every where to be observed in our days, how much blacker will our guilt appear?

Where is that Antient *Seriousness* and *Reservedness* and *Modesty* that heretofore has been thought not only essential to the *Spirit* of a *Christian*, but *Natural* to the *Temper* of an *Englishman*?

Alas! We seem to have changed not only our *Religion* but our *Climate* too. And may for Dissoluteness and Luxury, for Pride and Vanity and Idleness compare with the antient *Asiaticks*, and do perhaps out-strip several of our present neighbour Nations, though of a worse Religion.

But this is not all, so much are we degenerated from the antient strictness of Christianity, That those things that would not have been named among the first Christians without horror and banishing out of their Society all those that did them, are frequently practised among us. And those Vices that even in the worse times of Christianity the Actors were affraid or ashamed to own,

own, are now made a matter of Sport and Merriment, a *Trick* of *Youth*, a *Humour*, or a *Frolick*. What was then a deed of darkneſs, is now too often done in the face of the Sun, and the perſons concerned in the wickedneſs are ſo far from bluſhing at their guilt, that they relate their own actions as a pleaſant entertainment for their Company.

O the Riots and Drunkenneſs; the Frauds and Couſenage; the Filthy and Lewd ſpeeches; the Whoredoms and Adulteries; the Blaſphemous Oaths and Imprecations that are dayly without any regret, any ſenſe of ſhame, practiſed among us.

We ſeem to have loſt not only the virtue of *Modeſty* but of *Hypocriſie* too (if ſo *bad* a thing may be called by ſo *good* a name.) Thoſe Vices and Lewdneſſes which heretofore ſought corners and wore a Mask do now appear with a naked Face.

It is true, It is to be hoped, That the greateſt part of us are not guilty of ſuch Crimes and Immoralities as we ſpeak of: But this does not wholly excuſe us; For we are all faulty in this, That theſe kind of Vices are not ſufficiently branded and put out of countenance. They paſs under *eaſie*, not to ſay, *Creditable* names. And ſo little a ſenſe have we of them that a man may keep his Reputation among us though he be never

never so Vicious, supposing that his Vices be of the Mode of the Country. This very thing without our personal guilt makes the *sin* a *National sin*; and God will Visit these things upon us, except we Repent.

But to make up the measure of our Iniquities, we can in the *Third* place live after this dissolute rate, and yet at the same time many of us think ourselves *Religious*: we increase the guilt of our *Prophaneness* by joyning *Formality* with it.

If we would disclaim all Religion when we led such wretchedly careless and sensual lives, it would in some respects be more tolerable: For then Christianity would not suffer by us, It would get no *Odium*, no Ignominy in the world, It would not be an occasion to men to turn Atheists:

But to live *Un-Christian* lives and yet to call ourselves *Christians*: Nay to make our *Religion* a Sanctuary for our *Vices*, and to think that we may the more freely Indulge ourselves in them because we are of the Right Religion; This is intolerable, and extremely aggravates the iniquity of our practices. And yet this is a fault that we of this Nation are notoriously guilty of.

We often make Religion to consist in Opinion and outward Profession. If we have but once joined

joined ourselves to that party of Christians which we think is the Right and do Espouse all their *Controversies* and are Zealous in the observance of their particular *Forms* and *Rites*, whereby they are distinguished from the other *Sects* that are in being among us, we think we are true *Saints*, let our *Morals* be what they will.

This is the *Religion* that is every where too much in Fashion. If for instance I have Listed my self a Member of some *Church* of the *Separation*, (as there is great variety of them) If I be but true to the Principles of my *Church*, and vigorous in opposing those that are not of my Way; and constant in my attendance upon the *Brethren* at their *Assemblies*: This Zeal of mine will excuse a multitude of my other Failings: And though I now and then use indirect ways of Dealing in my Calling; Though I be Uncharitable and Censorious; Though I affront Authority and live in a constant Disobedience and Contempt of the Laws of it, yet my fervour for that which I take to be the *True Religion* and the Relation I stand in to the *people of God* will bear me out as to these matters.

On the other side, If I be a Member of the *Church of England*, I am too often apt to think my self in a fair way to Heaven, if I be but *Stout* for the *Church*, and *Zealous* against the *Sectaries*, and punctual in observing the *Ceremonies* of the *Liturgy*,

Liturgy, and now and then come to the *Sacrament*; Though it may be I have nothing of the True *Life* and *Spirit* of Christianity in me, nothing of that Sobriety and Meekness, and Charity, and inward Devotion that our Saviour doth indispensably require of all his followers.

Nay so far from that it may be I think 'tis no matter how I live, if I be but a good *Subject* to the *King* and a true *Son* of the *Church*. Nay it is well if don't go further, it is well if I don't make *Vice* and *Debauchery* an essential Character of a man that is right in his Principles; it is well if I don't brand seriousness of Conversation, and a care of ones words and actions with the name of *Fanaticism*, and reproach every one as a *Puritan*, that will not Swear and Drink and take those Un-Christian Liberties that I do.

You know there are such men as these frequently to be found in all the several *Sects* and *Ways* of *Religion* among us. But O! What is become of Christianity all the while.

This sure cannot be thy Religion, O Blessed Jesus! since it is so unlike both thy Actions and thy Doctrines: Thou never placedst any virtue or praise in *Knowing* but in *Doing*; In being of this or the other particular external *Mode* of *Religion*: but in *believing* thy *Gospel* and *following* thy *Example*, in Mortifying our Lusts, and leading a life of Peaceableness, and Obedience, and Humility,

lity, and all manner of inward Holiness and Purity.

How our Brethren of the *Separation* will dispose of their Members that are of this temper, I know not; But as to all those that pretend to be of our Communion, and yet live scandalous lives, and think that their owning themselves for the *Sons* of the *Church* will make Atonement for their Immoralities, It is to be feared they have done us more hurt than ever they will do us good. And unless they would Reform, it may perhaps be wished that we were rid of them: Let them declare themselves *Fanaticks*, *Papists*, Any thing, rather than Members of the *Church* of *England*.

And though by their Recession and going over to the Enemies Camp we might possibly be so weakened that we could not support ourselves, but must be forced to fall under our Adversaries; Yet I do not know whether even then the Church would not be the better for it. And, it would perhaps be more desireable to live in a mean, low, afflicted condition without such Company, than to govern the world with it.

But *Fourthly*, These are not all the Maladies which this distressed *Church* and *Nation* labours under: There is another Wound that is as

Wide and Bleeds as much as any of the reſt: And which, if timely care be not taken of it, may cauſe her expiration as ſoon as any other.

I mean the Unnatural, Un-Chriſtian *Feuds* and *Diviſions* that are amongſt us, our Nations being rent and torn into ſo many *Parties* and *Factions*, and the cruel and bitter *Animoſities* with which each party does proſecute the other. And all this, if men would conſider, for Little things in compariſon, things certainly not worth all this heat, things that the Wiſeſt and Beſt of the ſeveral diſſenting parties confeſs to be indifferent.

O! How do men by theſe fooliſh and unaccountable Diviſions weaken the common intereſt that all pretend at leaſt to be concerned for? What advantages are hereby given to the Adverſaries?

It is likely indeed that as They firſt ſet on foot, ſo They ſtill continue to foment theſe differences. They laugh at this opportunity of making Proſelytes to their Religion, and a plentiful Harveſt they have hereby Reaped to themſelves.

But where is our wiſdom in the mean time? Have men no more underſtanding than to be ſtill hot and eager in their contentions about a ſhadow, when there is an Enemy at the Gate, that is in a fair way to take from us the *Subſtance*?

Some

Some indeed may be apt to dispute which side ought to comply, Whether the *Dissenters* ought to come over to the *Established Church*, or the *Church* to them? It is not now a time fully to debate the Merits of that Cause. But this may be truly said, If men would be honest and sincere, and mix no passion or worldly concernment with their Religion, the Point would soon be Decided on the Churches side.

Every man that calls himself a *Protestant* would think himself obliged to obey Lawful Authority in all things where he was convinced their commands were not Unlawful. And if he could not with a safe Conscience come up to it in *all things*, he would come up as far as he could. And as for those things that he was not satisfied about, as he would not Condemn or Censure Those that were persuaded, or practised otherwise, so neither would he raise any disturbance in the Church by joyning himself to an opposite Party.

And on the other side Those that did Conform to the Church in *all things* would not withdraw their Charity from their fellow Christians for not doing so much as They. Though they differed from them in several Opinions, yet they would joyn hands with them in all Christian Offices of Mutual *Love* and *Charity*, and in a joynt opposition of the *Common Enemy*.

But alas! Things are not thus with us. And I note it as a fault for which we ought deeply to be affected this Day; And if men did duely weigh the *ſinfulneſs* and the *danger* that all *Schiſms* and *Separations* of this kind do bring upon a Nation, they would be thus affected.

If human conjectures about the Reaſons and Cauſes of Divine Judgments may be allowed, it will appear from Hiſtory and Experience that there has been as much War and blood-ſhed cauſed in the world; as many Nations deſolated, as many Churches Ruined, by the malignity and evil influence of this *Sin* of *Schiſm* as any other.

And if ever God in judgment ſhall think fit to give over this flouriſhing *Church* of ours as a prey to that mighty *Hunter*, that would erect an Univerſal *Spiritual Monarchy* to himſelf upon the Ruines of all the particular *Churches* of *Chriſtendom*, we ſhould have good Reaſon to believe that the unneceſſary *Diviſions* and *Quarrels* among ourſelves had a great hand in bringing on the *Judgment*.

In all appearance we of this Nation might be Impregnable, as to our *Religion*, if thoſe Proteſtants amongſt us, who have been ſo long ſeparated from the Communion of our National Church would once return into its boſom; that we might all heartily join together in *Loving* and

Aſſiſting

Assisting one another, and *Opposing* the publick *Adversary*.

But *Fifthly* and *Lastly*, If the state of our *Church* and *Nation* was not near so bad as I have now represented it, Yet there is another thing still that *all*, even the *best* of us, have reason to be sensible of and to mourn for; as that which of it self is sufficient to bring destruction upon us. And that is our *Ingratitude* to God for his many *Mercies* and *Deliverances*, and our *Unprofitableness* under those *means* of *Grace* that he has been pleased so long to afford us.

I cannot call this a particular *sin*, It is, if you will, an *Aggravation* of all the rest, or *all* of them summed up together. However I give it a particular consideration, because it is a thing that God has set a Mark upon, and has so far declared his displeasure against it, that he has determined it a just cause to *Un-people* or *Un-Church* a Nation.

Our Saviour tells us that when a certain man had Planted a Fig-Tree in his Vineyard and came and sought Fruit thereon, and found none he said unto the Dresser *of his Vineyard, Behold these three years I come seeking fruit on this Fig-Tree and find none, cut it down, why doth it cumber the ground?* Luke xiii. 6.

Let us apply this Parable to ourselves, as certainly the Reason of it will sufficiently prompt

us.

us. Was ever *Fig-Tree* or *Vineyard* more curiously Planted, more carefully Dreſt, more richly Manured, more ſecurely Fenced, from the outrages of Beaſts of Prey than our *Fig-Tree*, our *Vineyard*, the *Church* of *England*? For of a Church this Parable is neceſſarily to be underſtood.

Is there any one of the *Proteſtant Churches* in *Europe* that has been ſo regularly Reformed; that in the firſt Conſtitution of it was Eſtabliſhed upon Principles ſo juſtifiable, ſo agreeable with the Laws of *Nature* and *Chriſtianity* and the Civil Rights of the *Kingdom*, as this Church of *England* was?

Is there any *Proteſtant Church* in *Europe* whoſe Articles of *Faith*, whoſe *Diſcipline*, whoſe Manner and Rites of *Worſhip* are more correſpondent to Antient *Tradition* and Catholick *Doctrine* and *Practice*?

Is there any *Proteſtant Church* in *Europe* wherein the Word of God has been taught more ſincerely and more to the edification of the people than among us?

Is there any *Proteſtant Church* that has more comfortably lived under their own *Vines* and their own *Fig-Trees*, has more freely enjoyed all the benefits and privileges that either *Religion* or their *Birthright* could Intitle them to, than we have done?

Is

Is there any *Protestant Church* that has been preserved so miraculously, that hath received so many wonderful deliverances from Enemies of all sorts; Enemies of the *Hills* and of the *Vallies*: and yet notwithstanding all; notwithstanding the contrivances of *false Brethren* within ourselves, and the assaults of the *Publick Adversaries* abroad, does still not only continue in Being, but Flourisheth also, as God be thanked we do at this Day?

The care that God hath taken of this Nation hath been wonderful; his Providences towards us are to be admired for the Rareness and the Graciousness of them. And therefore justly may the Lord of the Vineyard after all this Care, all these Providences, expect some good Fruit from us proportionable to his Kindness to us. And long has he waited for it.

But what Fruits have we produced after all these great opportunities and this great patience? Can we really say, that we now are *Better* than our *Fore-Fathers* of the Reformation, who perhaps had not more light, certainly had not that experience of Gods Mercies and Deliverances that we have? I am affraid our Hearts will give it Against us.

Can we say that we are not worse than they? That we have at least made as good an use and improvement of the Talents that have been committed to us as they did? It is to

be

be feared we shall be cast upon this Point also.

Our own experience will tell us, if we have lived any considerable time in the world, That even since our remembrance, Though God hath more and more both heaped his *Favours* and his *Severities* upon us; yet we have grown worse and worse.

His Mercies have not Melted us; His Judgments have not Reclaimed us; He hath done all that is Possible both by *Gentle* and *Severe* Methods to bring us to a sense of our Duty, but We like the *Deaf Adder have stopped our Ears, and have not hearkned to the voice of the Charmer, though he charmed never so wisely.*

What therefore, these things considered, can we expect, but that God should pass the same Sentence upon this Unthankful, this Irreclaimable People of *England*, that the Lord of the *Vineyard* passed upon the *Fig-Tree* in the Parable? *Cut it down, why doth it cumber the ground?*

Or, If you will take it in the words of the Prophet, what should hinder or what can we expect, but that God should speak to us (that is, decree upon us) what he did to his beloved people in the fifth of *Isaiahs* Prophecy, *O Inhabitants of* Jerusalem *and men of* Judah, *judg I pray you between me and my Vineyard. What could I have done more to my Vineyard that I have not done in it? Wherefore then when I looked that it should bring forth Grapes,*

Grapes, brought it forth Wild Grapes? And now go to, I will tell you what I will do with my Vineyard, I will take away the hedg thereof and it shall be eaten up; and break down the wall thereof and it shall be troden down, and I will lay it waſt, it shall not be pruned or digged, but there shall come up briers and thorns.

This is the *Judgment* that is here threatened in the Text, which I now come in the *Second* place more particularly to consider.

A grievous Judgment without doubt it is, and the greateſt that can fall upon any Nation; For ſo much as our *Souls* are of greater concernment to us than our *Bodies*: So much are *Spiritual* Mercies to be preferred before *Temporal*: And ſo much the greater miſery is it for any people to be deprived of them than of the other.

For that Nation that was once Gods own peculiar people to be abandoned by him, and to be layed in common with the reſt of the world that are under the *Prince of the power of the Air*; For that Nation that once enjoyed the influences of Gods preſence, and the Light of the Truth, and the benefits of his Ordinances, now to be ſtript of all theſe; To be without God, without Light, without the Ordinary means of ſaving their Souls; O what more deplorable condition can be imagined!

And yet thus severe hath God been with many Nations, thus when their sins have cryed loud, and the sinners have been impudent, and all Methods of amendment have been ineffectual, God hath in anger *Removed their Candlestick* from among them.

The Church of *Ephesus* which Christ thus threatens in the Text, Nay all the other six Churches of *Asia* to which the Epistles are sent, are sad instances of this. Once most flourishing Churches they were, even the very Paradise of the Lord, but now they lie wast and desolate, over run with Ignorance and Barbarity and *Mahometanism*.

That *Africa* which is not now more fruitful of Monsters, than it was once of excellently Wise and Learned men; That *Africa* which formerly afforded us our *Clemens*, our *Origen*, our *Tertullian*, our *Cyprian*, our *Augustine*, and many other extraordinary Lights in the Church of God; That Famous *Africa* in whose soyl Christianity did thrive so prodigiously, and could boast of so many Flourishing Churches, Alas, is now a Wilderness. *The wild Boars have broken into the Vineyard and eaten it up, and it brings forth nothing but briers and thorns*: To use the words of the Prophet.

And who knows but God may suddainly make this Church and Nation, This our *England*, which *Jeshurun*-like is *waxed fat and grown proud, and has kicked against God*, such another ex-

example of the Vengeance of this Kind.

It is true, in all appearance there is no danger of having our *Candlestick* removed from us in the same sense or manner that those Churches I have instanced in, had theirs. We have no apprehensions that either *Mahometanism* or *Paganism* will come into these Kingdoms: At least not in our days.

It is another kind of removal of our *Candlestick* that we have reason to fear; It is another Religion nigher at hand that is most likely to displace our *Candlestick*.

You all know what Religion I mean, It is *Popery* that most threatens us. It is that restless busie Religion that has made so much disturbance in Christendom; that has always been and is still so active by all means just or unjust, by fraud or force to insinuate it self into all places. It is this we ought to have the most apprehensions of.

It is true those that are of this Religion do profess the Name of Christ, and we do not deny them the Title of a Christian Church; But of all sorts of Christianity this seems to be the worst, and next to the being of no Church, it is the least desireable to be of This.

And for all the specious Titles of *Visible* and *Perpetual* and *Catholick* and *Infallible*, which they would amuse us with; If we did seriously consider what a kind of *Religion* we now enjoy, and what a kind of *Religion* will come in the place of

it, if ever they get their will of us, we ſhould ſadly reflect upon the Change. And for all we continued a Chriſtian Country, Yet we ſhould lament over ourſelves that our *Candleſtick was removed out of its place.*

I believe there are few here but ſufficiently underſtand what a kind of Religion this is, and what you are to expect from it: But yet I will beg leave to give a brief account of ſome of the Articles of it. Not to inſtruct you, but to give you occaſion to conſider how well it will ſuite with us of this Kingdom, or indeed with Any that would be Chriſtians after the way of Chriſts Inſtitution.

It is a Religion, whoſe avowed Principles are to keep their people in ignorance as much as they can. For with them *Ignorance is the Mother of Devotion.* And if you do but blindly *Believe* as the Church *Believes*, and blindly *Obey* what is impoſed upon you, you are good *Catholicks.*

It is a Religion, in which you will not be allowed to have any *Prayers* in *publick* that you can underſtand. When you come to Church, you may entertain yourſelves with ſaying over your *Roſary* (which is a ſolemn ſet of Praiers containing *Ten* addreſſes to the *Virgin Mary* for *One* to our *Lord*) and other *Private* Prayers, if you have them: But joyn in the *Publick* Service with the Miniſter

Minister you cannot, unless you understand *Latin*.

It is a Religion, into which as soon as you enter you must give up your Bibles. For the people must not read the Scripture without especial Licence, and not at all of that Translation you now have of it.

It is a Religion that Robs you of half the Sacrament: For you must never be allowed to receive the Cup in the Lords Supper; Notwithstanding the Institution of our Lord in express words: And notwithstanding the Practice of the Primitive Church to the contrary.

It is a Religion, in which you are so far from being permitted *to try all things and to hold to that which is good*, according to the Apostles Command; That you must wholly submit your reason and understanding to the Dictates of an Infallible Judg, even so far, (if one of their greatest Authors say true) to be bound to believe *Virtue* to be *Bad*, and *Vice* to be *Good*, if it shall please his *Holiness* to say so.

Bellar. de Rom. Pontif. lib. 4. cap. 5.

Nay, It is a Religion in which you shall not be allowed to believe your very *Senses*. For though four of your five Senses tell you that one of the Consecrated Elements in the Sacrament is a piece of Bread, yet you are obliged under pain of Damnation to believe that it is not so; But the very Body of Christ that was Crucified at *Jerusalem*, and is now in Heaven; and which upon this suppo-

supposition must be Actually and Separately present in a thousand distant places at once every day.

It is a Religion that will bring you back to the Old *Paganish Idolatry*: Or to that which is as near it as can be. For as the Old Heathens had their inferior *Deities*, their *Dæmons* and *Hero's* to be Mediators between God and them: So will you have your several Saints and Patrons of the like nature, which you must apply to for the recommending your Prayers to the Divine Majesty. And as they had the *Images* of their Gods and Mediators to worship and fall down before; So will you also for the same purpose have the *Images* of the blessed *Trinity*, and the Virgin *Mary* and the rest of the Saints.

It is true, the Pagans were mightily reproved for these things, both in the Scripture and by the Primitive Christians. And they made several Defences and Apologies for their Practices. And the very same doth the Church of *Rome* now make for her Invocation of Saints and Image-Worship. But if the one were guilty of Idolatry there is little doubt but the other are so also: For there is not an hairs breadth difference between the Pleas and Apologies that each party makes for it self.

Nay, It is a Religion that will engage you in a more Unnatural Idolatry than ever the Pagans were guilty of. *Cicero* that was a Heathen himself,

De Nat. Deor. lib. 3.

self, and knew as much of that Religion as any man living did; Yet affirms that there was none so mad in any of the Religions of his time as to pretend to eat his God. But yet this you must do in that Religion every time you Receive the Sacrament. And the Priest does it every day when he says Mass. For he eats that which himself and you all must worship. And you are taught to believe that what you worship in the Mass is God, that is, the very *Humanity* of our Saviour united personally to his *Divinity*.

It is true, In this Religion there are many advantages and conveniences pretended, that you cannot really have in the Religion you now profess. But look you to them, whether they will prove so in the event.

The easie ways they have to reconcile sinners to God, even after the most Vicious life, by the means of the Sacrament of *Penance*, as it is commonly Taught and Administred in that Church: Together with the liberty you may take in the choice of such a Confessor as you think will be most favourable to your Case. Add to this, The Virtue of *Indulgences*, and *Masses* for the Dead. As also the efficacy of *Pilgrimages*, *Reliques* and *Holy Garments*, &c. For the purging of Sins.

All these things put together may perhaps rid you of a great many Uneasinesses and Scruples and Pangs of Conscience, with which you might other-

otherwise be troubled; and which would not be so easily Cured in the Way that you are now in. There is little doubt but upon the Commonly received Principles of that Religion, you may go to Heaven upon much easier Terms than you can upon ours: But yet for all that, in a business of such consequence as the Salvation of a mans Soul is, It is good to make a serious enquiry whether of the two Ways is the safer.

But there is one thing in this Religion which will not so easily go down with *Englishmen*: And that is, That you cannot therein be any longer good Subjects to your Prince, than his Holiness will give you leave.

If his Majesty should be a *Heretic* (as it is certain his present Majesty is in their account) Nay, In other Cases besides that of *Heresie*, the Pope has power to Depose him, and Absolve his Subjects from their Allegiance. And that not only in the judgment of their most famous *Casuists*, and by the Established Rules of their *Canon Law*, but by the Decree of an Infallible *General Council*. And it has been a frequent Practice of the Pope to make use of his Power in this way.

Nay, in this Kingdom of *England* he needs not stay for such pretences. For his Holiness (as appears upon Record) has declared, that this Kingdom is held in Fee of the Papacy. And that whoever wears the Crown here is their *Vassal*, and

and consequently may be turned out at pleasure.

What the effects of these Doctrines have been, we of this Kingdom have had sufficient experience since the Reformation; Not to mention the troubles they have given us in former times. The instances are so many and so very well known, that I need not name them. But if they were all forgot, The *Late* shall I say or the *Present Popish Plot* for the taking away the life of His Sacred Majesty, and Subverting the Protestant Religion and the Established Government of this Kingdom, now brought to light; This alone, though all the other instances were worn out of memory, would sufficiently shew us what we are to expect from these *Roman Principles*, as to the security either of our *Prince*, or our *Liberties*, or our *Religion*.

But blessed be Gods Name, that this Cursed Design has been hitherto Defeated, and we are here to Praise him for it, and to Pray to him for a farther Discovery of it.

And blessed be his Name, That he hath given us this Remarkable evidence that he has not yet abandoned us, notwithstanding our manifold provocations. Certainly this extraordinary Providence of God towards us, is one of the most Comfortable Arguments that we can draw to ourselves, That God has yet some Pitty for this Nation; If we will but pitty ourselves.

And Lastly, blessed be Gods Name that this Mercy has already had this good effect upon us, That we are awakened into a more lively sense of the manifold Iniquity and Mischief and Danger of the Popish Religion and Party.

What is now further to be desired, but that the Issue of things among us may be suitable to these beginnings?

God has once more given this Nation a great Opportunity for the Establishing her Tottering *Candlestick*, and who knows whether ever the like will be offered again?

It therefore infinitely concerns all of us, especially You to whom the Managery of Publick Affairs is committed, to improve this Present Opportunity to the good purposes for which it was given; That so this great Mercy and Providence of God be not lost upon us.

Offences may come. And we may be disappointed. But as our Saviour said, *Wo be to that Man by whom the Offence cometh.* Such a man will never be able to answer it either to God, or his Country, or at last to his own Conscience.

O may God so inspire you with the Spirit of Wisdom and Counsel, with Temper and Moderation, with a Spirit so disengaged from private Ends, and Interests, so unbyassed by particular Faction, And so wholly intent upon the Public Good, that you may be the blessed Instruments

ments of Healing all the Distempers we groan under; And of Deriving upon us those Blessings which we this Day Pray for.

That by your means *Atheism* and *Contempt* of *Religion*, as also *Lewdness* and *Debauchery* of all kinds may be so discouraged that they shall not dare to appear with an open Face.

That by your means a stop may be put to the Scandalous *Schisms* and *Divisions* that are among us; That if it be possible we may serve God with one Heart and with one Mind.

That by your means, not only the Person of His Sacred Majesty, and the Rights of his Crown may be secured against all wicked attempts, whether of Papists or Others: But also that upon his Head the Crown may be so Supported, and so Flourish, that we may at least be in a condition not to fear the Malice or the Power of any Foreign Enemy.

Lastly, that by your means as effectual Provision as possible may be made: both for the keeping out that *Foreign Religion*, which, as we have seen, so little serves the ends of Christianity, and so much disserves the Interest both of King and People: And for the more firm Establishment of the *Protestant Religion* of the Church of *England*: That so our present *Candlestick* may be continued to our Posterity, and they as well as we may have reason to bless God for You.

But in Order to the procuring those great blessings to the Kingdom: There is a duty necessary to be performed by all of us in our *private* Capacities, which is here specified in the Text, *viz. Repentance. I will come unto thee quickly* (says our Saviour) *and will remove thy Candlestick out of its place, except thou Repent.* Which *Repentance*, How it ought to be performed by us, is the *Third* and Last thing I am to speak to.

But because I would not exceed the ordinary limits of a Sermon, I shall only mention the Heads of those things which upon this Occasion are proper to be insisted on.

If we would *Repent* sincerely of our sins, so as to do our parts towards the prevention of those *Judgments* that hang over our heads, and the procuring those *Blessings* we stand in need of: It will be necessary that every one of us do deeply Humble and Afflict our Souls before God for our *own Sins*, the sins which we have in person committed; Devoutly confessing them, and begging of God, That when he makes inquisition for a *National* guilt, he would not remember them, nor let the publick suffer any thing upon our account.

It is also necessary that we be duly sensible of the *Common Sins* of others so as to *Repent* of them also. Lamenting before God the Corruptions of the Times: The Publick Fashionable Vices of the Age. This was the Spirit of *David* who was con-

concern'd for the faults of others as well as his own; *Rivers of Tears* (saith he) *run down my Eyes because men keep not thy Law.*

Nay, further, In order to a *National Repentance*, We are obliged to confess to God the *Sins* of our *Forefathers*, and pray for the forgiveness of them also. What my own former *private* sins are to me at present with respect to my *personal* Capacity; the same are the sins of our *Fathers* to us all, considered as a Nation or People. We are to Repent as well of the past as of the present sins of the Land. This is the Rule that God himself hath prescribed for a *Publick Repentance*. And for not putting that Rule in Practice, the people of the *Jews* in our Saviours time severely suffered. For upon the *Men of that Generation* (as our Saviour had threatened) *was Revenged all the Righteous blood shed in the Land from the blood of* Abel *to the blood of* Zachariah. Though yet none of that blood was shed by that Generation. Great reason therefore have we at this day seriously to put up to God that Petition which we so often repeat in our *Litany*, *Remember not Lord our Offences, nor the Offences of our Forefathers; but spare us good Lord, spare thy people whom thou hast Redeemed with thy most precious blood and be not angry with us for ever.* Matth. xxiii. 35.

But to make this *Repentance* such as it ought to be, there is further required a through *Change* in our *Hearts* and *Minds*; So that as we Confess and ask Pardon for the Faults of our Lives, we should

also

also amend them. Without this all our Ceremonious Humiliation will signifie nothing.

Nay, We must not only Reform *Ourselves*, but do what we can in our Spheres towards the Reforming of *Others*. And every one of us might do a great deal, if we would; though it was but in this one thing, In heartily discouraging *Scandalous* and *Open* sins where ever we meet with them; So far as it may be done without breach of Respect to our Superiors or Forfeiture of common Prudence. If Vice had once an ill name in the world; Was once generally stigmatized with Reproach and Ignominy, it would quickly lose its Empire, and thousands that are now the slaves of it would become Proselytes to Virtue.

But further if we truely fear the *Judgment* I have been speaking of, and by our *Repentance* would prevent it, Let us make this particular expression of that *Repentance*, *viz.* Let us set a great Value upon the *Religion* we at present enjoy. Let us in all our Actions shew a great Zeal and Concernment for it, and do what we can both towards the continuing and promoting it.

If Every one of us in his way would but express half that Zeal and Industry and Diligence in the Cause of our Religion that we see our Adversaries do; We should probably in a very little time see a quite different Face of Things: And should not only put a stop to their present Successes, but gain so much ground upon them as to cast them

them into despair of ever making a Conquest of this Nation. But here is the misery, we are so Confident and Secure of the goodness of our Cause, that we think it will support itself without any help of ours. Let us in this Point learn Wisdom from our Enemies.

But especially let us practise heartily those Virtues which our Religion peculiarly Teaches as Opposed to Popery. Let us be Meek, and Gentle, and Long-Suffering, even to those that differ in Opinion from us. Let us hate all Tricks and Devices and Equivocations, both in our Words and our Carriage. Let us be Constantly and Inflexibly Loyal to our Prince, and let no consideration in the world make us violate our Allegiance to him.

To all which, Let us in the last place add our earnest and constant Prayers to God, That he would be pleased to take pity of us. To avert the *Judgments* we are threatened with, and continue the *Mercies* we have hitherto enjoyed. That he would protect our *Religion* and make it to flourish more and more. That he would preserve our *King*, our *Government*, our *Laws*. And in order thereunto, That he would Influence and Direct all the Publick Councels, especially the great *Councel* of the Nation now Assembled in *Parliament*, That this *Session* of Theirs may have a Happy and a Glorious Issue. Which God of his Mercy grant, *&c.*

FINIS.

FINIS.

4, 5

The Duty and happiness of doing good.

TWO SERMONS.

The Former, Preached at the

YORK-SHIRE FEAST,

In *Bow-Church*, *Feb.* 17. 1679.

The Other, Before the

Lord MAYOR AND ALDERMEN OF LONDON,

At the Spittle, *Apr.* 14. 1680.

By *JOHN SHARPE*, D. D. Rector of St. *Giles* in the Fields, and Chaplain to the Right Honourable the Lord High Chancellour of *England*.

LONDON,
Printed for *Walter Kettilby*, at the Bishop's-Head in St. *Paul's* Church-yard, 1680.

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OF

LONDON,

BODLEIAN LIBRARY OXFORD

(4)

A SERMON

Preached at the Second

GENERAL MEETING

OF THE

GENTLEMEN, and others in and near *LONDON*,

Who were Born within the

COUNTY of YORK,

In the Church of St. *Mary-le-Bow*,

February 17. $16\frac{79}{80}$.

By *JOHN SHARPE*, D. D. Rector of St. *Giles* in the Fields, and Chaplain to the Right Honourable the Lord High Chancellour of *England*.

LONDON,

Printed for *Walter Kettilby* at the *Bishop's-Head*, in St. *Paul's* Church-Yard. 1680.

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SERMON

Preached at the Second

GENERAL MEETING

OF THE

GENTLEMEN, and others in

and near LONDON,

Who were Born within the

COUNTY of YORK,

BODLEIAN LIBRARY

In the Church of St. Mary-le-Bow,

February 17. 1685.

By JOHN SHARPE, D. D. Rector of St. Giles in the Fields, and Chaplain to the Right Honourable the Lord High Chancellour of England.

LONDON,

Printed for Walter Kettilby at the Bishop's-Head in St. Paul's Church-Yard. 1686.

To my Honoured Friends and Country-Men,

Mr. { *William Petyt* / *Richard Graham* / *John Cooke* / *Mich. Wrightson* / *Tob. Humphrys* / *Anth. Lawson* } Mr. { *John Shutt* / *Francis Boynton* / *Peter Short* / *Gab. Wettenhall* / *Arthur Sedgwick* / *Thomas Watson* }

Stewards of the last *York-shire* Feast.

GENTLEMEN,

I Now at length Present you with that Sermon which at your desire I Preached at the Second Anniversary Meeting of our Countrey-men, and which you were pleased so far to Approve as to Request the Publication of it. That I have not performed your Request so soon as might be expected, I hope you will pardon me, since I had not till this time a convenient leisure to Transcribe

my Papers for the Press. If this plain Discourse, now that it is publick, do any way conduce to promote Doing Good *which is the Argument of it, I shall thank God for the Success, and You for putting me upon the Attempt.*

Gentlemen, I am

Your Affectionate Countrey-man,

Friend and Servant,

JOHN SHARPE.

A SERMON PREACHED

At the Second general Meeting of the Gentlemen and others in and near *London*, who were Born within the County of *York*.

ECCLES. III. 10.

I know that there is no good in them, but for a man to rejoyce and to do good in his life.

THis Book of *Eccleſiaſtes* gives us an account of the ſeveral Experiments that *Solomon* had made in order to the finding out wherein the Happineſs of Man in this World doth conſiſt; and theſe Words are one of the concluſions he drew from thoſe Experiments. No man had ever greater Opportunities of Trying all the ways wherein men generally ſeek for Con-

Contentment than he had; and no man did ever more industriously apply himself to, or took a greater liberty in enjoying those good things that are commonly most admired than he did: And yet after all his Labor and all his Enjoyments he found nothing but Emptiness and Dissatisfaction.

He thought to become Happy by Philosophy, *giving his heart*, as he tells us, *to seek and search out all the things that come to pass under the Sun*: Yet upon Tryal, he found all this to be *Vanity and vexation of Spirit*.

Eccles. 1. 13.

He applyed his mind to Political Wisdom and other sorts of Knowledge, and his Attainments in that kind were greater than of any that were before him; yet he experienced at last that *in Wisdom was much grief, and he that increaseth Knowledge increaseth Sorrow*.

ver. 18.

He *proved his heart* (as he tells us) *with Mirth and Wine* and all sorts of Sensual Pleasures to find if these were good for the Sons of men: and yet so far was he from his desired satisfaction in these things, that he was forced to *say of Laughter that it was mad, and of Mirth what good doth it*.

Cap. 2. ver. 1, 3.

ver. 2.

He turned himself to works of Pomp and Magnificence, he built him stately *Houses*, and made him *Gardens*, and *Vineyards*, and *Orchards*, and *Fountains*. He increased his Possessions, and *gather-*

ver 4.

ed

ed Silver and Gold and the precious Treasures of Kings and of the Provinces. He got him a vast Retinue, and kept the most splendid Court that ever any Prince of that Countrey did: yet (as he tells us) when he came to *look upon all the works that his hands had wrought, and on the labour that he had laboured to do, behold all was vanity and vexation of Spirit, and there was no profit under the Sun.* ver. 8. ver. 11.

But wherein then is there any Profit if not in these things? What is that good that the sons of men are to apply themselves to in order to their living as comfortably as the state of things here will allow? This question (after an intimation of the uncertainty and perplexedness of all humane events, but withal of the exactness of the Providence of God *who hath made every thing beautiful in its season*, He thus resolves in the words of the Text, *I know* (saith he) *that there is no good in them but for a man to rejoyce and do good in his life*, that is to say,

I have found by long experience that all the Happiness that is to be had in the good things of this life doth arise from these two things, *Rejoycing* in the enjoyment of them, and *doing Good* to others with them while we live. Take away these two Uses and there is no good in them.

Or if you please we may Interpret the first part of his Proposition not of *things* but of *men* thus; I *I know there is no good in them, i. e.* I am convinced that

there is nothing so good for the sons of men; or, nothing that more contributes to their happiness in this world, than that every *man should rejoyce and do good in his life.* And to this purpose the words are rendred by several Interpreters, but it is no matter which of the senses we pitch upon, since in effect they come both to one thing.

Two things then, *Solomon* here recommends to every one that would live comfortably in this world, *Rejoycing* and *doing Good*: and I do not know what can be more proper and seasonable to be recommended and insisted on to you at this time and on this occasion, than these two things; for the putting *them* in practice makes up the whole design of this Meeting.

We are here so many Brethren met together to *Rejoyce* and to *do Good*. To *Rejoyce* together in the sense and acknowledgment of Gods mercies and Blessings to us, and in the enjoyment of Society one with another: And to *do Good* not only by encreasing our Friendship and Mutual Correspondence, but by joyning together in a chearful Contribution to those our Country-men that need our Charity. To entertain you therefore upon these Two Points seems to be my Proper Business.

But in treating of them I shall make bold to invert the order in which they are put in the Text, and shall first speak of *doing Good* though it be last named,

named, and shall afterwards treat of *Rejoycing*. The truth is, *doing good* in the order of nature goes before *Rejoycing*, for it is the Foundation of it. There can be no true joy in the Possession or use of any worldly blessings, unless we can satisfie our selves we have done some *good* with them. It is the *doing good* that sanctifies our other enjoyments and makes them matter of Rejoycing.

Now in treating of this Argument I shall briefly endeavour these Three things.

First, I shall earnestly recommend to you the Practice of *doing good* upon several Considerations.

Secondly, I shall represent the Practicableness of it, by shewing the several ways which every person (though in the meanest Circumstances) is capable of doing good.

Thirdly, I shall make two or three Inferences by way of Application.

I begin with the First thing, seriously to recommend the practice of *doing good*.

But where shall I begin to speak, either of the Obligations that lye upon us, or of the Benefits and Advantages that do accrue to us by *doing good in our lives*? or having begun, where shall I make an end? the subject is so copious that the study of a whole life cannot exhaust it. The more we consider it, still the more and the weightier Arguments will

preſent themſelves to us to ingage us in the practice of it: and the more we practiſe it, ſtill the more ſhall we *deſire* ſo to do, and the more happy and Bleſſed ſhall we find our ſelves to be.

For, to *do good* is nothing elſe but to act according to the frame and make of our Beings. It is to gratifie thoſe Inclinations and Appetites that are moſt ſtrongly rooted in our Natures; ſuch as Love and Natural Affection, Pity and Compaſſion, a Deſire of Friends and a Propenſity to knot our ſelves into Companies and Societies: what are all theſe but ſo many *ſtimuli*, ſo many powerful incitements of nature to put us upon doing good offices one to another?

To *do good* is the end of all thoſe Acquiſitions, of all thoſe Talents, of all thoſe Favours and Advantages that God has bleſt us with, it is the proper uſe we are to put them to. If we do not employ them this way, we are ſo far from being *better* for them that we are much *worſe*. What will ſignifie our Wit and good Humour, our Strength of Reaſon and Memory, our Wiſdom and Knowledge, our Skill in Arts, and Dexterity in managing Buſineſs, our Wealth and Greatneſs, our Reputation and Intereſt in the world, I ſay what will all theſe ſignifie if they do not render us more Uſeful and Beneficial to others? That which ſets the price and value upon every worldly bleſſing, is the Opportunity it affords us of *doing good*.

To

To *do good* ſeems to be the foundation of all the Laws of Nature, the ſupreme Univerſal Law; it is that by which the World is ſupported, and take that away, all would preſently fall into confuſion. And perhaps if it were particularly examin'd, it would be found that all the other Natural Laws may be reduced to this and are ultimately to be reſolv'd into it. It is a queſtion whether there be any natural Standard whereby we can meaſure the Virtue or the Viciouſneſs of any Action, but the Influence that it hath to promote or hinder the *doing of good*. This is that that ſeems to ſtamp Virtue and Vice.

To *do good* is the great Work for the ſake of which we were ſent into the world, and no man lives farther to any purpoſe than as he is an Inſtrument of doing good. Be our lives otherwiſe never ſo buſie and full of action, yet if others receive no benefit by them, we cannot give our ſelves any tolerable account of our time, we have in effect liv'd idly and done nothing.

To *do good* is that which of all other ſervices is moſt acceptable to God, it is that which he hath laid the greateſt ſtreſs upon in the Scripture, it is that which he hath with the moſt earneſt and affectionate perſwaſives, with the ſtrongeſt Arguments, with the greateſt promiſes and with the moſt dreadful threatnings enforc'd upon us. It is

that

that which he hath chosen before all Sacrifices and all Religious worship strictly so called to be serv'd with. It is that which he hath appointed for the great Expression both of our Thankfulness for his Benefits, and of our Love and Devotion to him. Lastly it that which *Moses* and the Prophets make the Sum of the Old Law, and Christ and his Apostles the Sum of the New.

And very great Reason there is for it; for to *do good* is to become most like to God. It is that which of all other Qualities gives us the greatest resemblance of his Nature and Perfections, for perfect
1 *Joh.* 4. 8. Love and Goodness is the very Nature of God, and the Root of all his other Attributes; and there was never any Action done, any work wrought by him throughout the vast Tracts of infinite space, from the Beginning of time to this Moment, but was an Expression of his Love, and an instance of *doing good*, (nay I doubt not to say, the most severe acts of his Justice and Vengeance have all been such) And
Mat. 5. 44, 45. therefore with great reason hath our blessed Lord told us, that the way to become the Children of our Heavenly Father is to do good to all, with the same Freedom and Unreservedness that God makes his Sun to shine upon the World.

And of this our Blessed Saviour himself was the most illustrious Example that ever appeared in the world, so that to *do good* is that which doth most

most truly and perfectly render us the Disciples and Followers of Jesus, makes us really be what we pretend we are. His whole life (as the Gospel tells us) was but a continual going about doing good. The great Design of his Coming from Heaven, and of all that he spoke, and of all that he did, and of all that he suffer'd upon Earth, was the benefiting of others. And he hath left it as the great distinguishing Badge and Character, whereby his Disciples should be known from other men, that they should *love one another even as he had loved them*, that is (as his Apostle expounds him) they should love and do good to that degree as *to lay down their lives for the brethren.* *Joh.* 13. 34, 35. 1 *Joh.* 3. 16.

But to *do good* is not only our greatest Duty but our greatest Interest and Advantage, which is that that *Solomon* chiefly refers to in the Text. It is certain that no man can take a more Effectual way to render his Being in the world Happy and Comfortable to him (according to the ordinary course and event of things) in what Condition or Circumstances soever he is placed, than to do all the good he can in his life; so that though a man that lays out himself in this way, seems only to respect the good of other people, yet in true reckoning he most consults his own profit.

For to *do good* in the natural way to raise us friends, who shall be oblig'd to contribute their En-

Endeavours to the furthering our honeſt deſigns; to the upholding and ſecuring us in our Proſperity, and to the ſuccouring and relieving us when we are in any evil Circumſtances, ſuch is the Contrivance and the Conſtitution of this World, that no man can ſubſiſt of himſelf, but ſtands in continual need of others both for their comfortable Society and their neceſſary Aſſiſtance in his Affairs. Now of all men living the Good man who maketh it his Buſineſs to oblige all about him, is moſt likely to be the beſt befriended.

To *do good* is the trueſt way to procure to a mans ſelf a Good name and Reputation in the World, which as it is a thing deſirable upon many accounts, ſo it is a ſingular Advantage to a man for the carrying on his ſecular deſigns. Nay to *do good* is to Embalm a mans name and to tranſmit it with a grateful Odour to poſterity. *The memory of a good man ſhall be bleſſed.* And the ſence of mankind has always been, that too much honour could not be given to the name of thoſe that have done good in their generation.

Prov. 10.7

But which is a great deal more than all this, to *do good* is the moſt certain effectual means to procure the bleſſing of God upon our endeavours, and to entitle our ſelves to his more eſpecial care and providence and Protection: So that let what will come; in all circumſtances and conditions the

the good man has the greateſt aſſurance that all things ſhall at leaſt be tolerably well with him, and that he ſhall never be miſerable. *Truſt in the Lord* (ſaith *David*) *and be doing good, ſo ſhalt thou dwell in the Land, and verily thou ſhalt be fed.* *Pſal.* 37. *ver.* 3.

Nay further, to *do good* is to entail a bleſſing upon our Children after us. *I have been young and now am old* (ſaith the ſame Pſalmiſt) *yet ſaw I never the Righteous* (that is the merciful and good man, for that is the Notion of the word in that place and in moſt others) ſuch an one ſaw I never *forſaken nor his ſeed begging their bread.* *Ibid. v.* 25.

Laſtly to conclude this point, To *do good* (beſides all theſe advantages that attend it) is moſt to conſult our own peace, and to make the beſt proviſion poſſible for our pleaſure and delight. Charity (as Dr. *Hammond* uſed to ſay) is really a piece of Senſuality. And *Epicurus* himſelf the great Maſter of Voluptuouſneſs would confeſs that it was not only more Brave but more Pleaſant to do kindneſſes than to receive them. And certainly every good man will find it ſo, for as the exerciſe of Charity and Beneficence is as truly a gratification of our Natural Inclinations and Appetites as any other action or thing that cauſeth pleaſure to us: So is it alſo a gratification of thoſe Appetites which are the higheſt and the nobleſt

we have. Now by how much the appetite that is gratifi'd is more noble and divine; by ſo much muſt the delight that ariſeth from that gratification be more exquiſite. So that it was no very great Hyperbole of our Divine Poet when he ſaid that

——————— All joys go leſs
Than that one joy of doing kindneſſes.

And which is further to be conſidered, it is not with this pleaſure as it is with moſt others that vaniſh with the enjoyment, nay often leave bitterneſs and melancholy upon the mind after they are gone off. For to *do good* is a permanent pleaſure, a pleaſure that will laſt as long as our lives. The memory of our good actions will always be accompanied with Delight and Satisfaction; when all our other paſs'd Enjoyments prove matters of anguiſh and torment to us upon our reflections on them, theſe will be a refreſhment; and the nearer we approach to death, ſtill the more comfort we ſhall find in them. Would we therefore treaſure up to our ſelves a ſtock of laſting peace and joy to ſupport us in all conditions of our life and ſo make our paſſage eaſie at our death, let us do all the good we can.

I think I have ſaid enough to convince any one of the truth of *Solomons* Propoſition that *there is nothing better for a man,* nothing that more concerns him either in point of duty or happineſs *than to do good in his life.* Much more might be ſaid, and what hath been ſaid might have been ſaid with more advantage, and greater evidence if it had been fit to inſiſt upon every particular: but I will purſue this argument no further, but proceed to the ſecond general point I propos'd, which is to ſet before you the practicableneſs of this great duty, by ſhewing the ſeveral wayes which every perſon though in the meaneſt Circumſtances is capable of doing good.

A great many there are that are as ſtrongly convinced as may be that 'tis both their Intereſt and duty to be doing good in their lives, but they complain that it is not in their power, they have not any Means or Opportunities for it, and they bemoan themſelves ſadly upon this account, as thinking their lives uſeleſs becauſe they have not thoſe viſible Capacities of being ſerviceable to the world that others have.

To ſuch as theſe let me ſay this in the general: There is no condition in the world ſo mean and deſpicable, but yields us Opportunities of doing good. There is neither Old nor Young, Man nor

Woman, Rich nor Poor, High nor Low, Learned nor Unlearned, but in their Sphere, by a good husbandry of those Talents that God has intrusted to their care and management they may be very useful to others, and prove instruments of much good to their generations.

This truth St. *Paul* most elegantly sets forth in 1 *Cor.* 12. where he compares the Society of Christians to a Natural body. There he shews that as in the Natural body there are many members, and all those members have not the same dignity and honour, nor the same use or office: and yet every member (even the meanest) hath its particular use by which it doth real service to the body; nay so useful it is that the body cannot be without it: so it is with the Church of Christ and with every body politick. There is a necessity both in the Church and in the State, that there should be variety of functions and callings, and degrees, and conditions. There must be some to govern and some to be governed; there must be some more conspicuous, some more obscure; some whose gifts and endowments lay this way, and some whose Talents lay in another way; and yet there is not one of these but in his degree and station, either is or may be as useful as any that belong to the Society. *So that the eye cannot say to the hand* (as our Apostle there expresseth it) *I have no*

need of thee. Nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you, nay more, *thoſe members of the body* (as he continues) *that ſeem to be moſt feeble are yet very neceſſary.*

To reduce the Apoſtles notion to its particulars, or to ſhew in how many reſpects every individual perſon that is a Member of a Society is neceſſary to the publick, and either doth or may ſerve the Weal of it, and ſo do good in his life, is a task too great for me to undertake at this time, let it ſuffice at the preſent to propoſe to you theſe general heads.

First of all none can want opportunities of doing good that is in a capacity of performing any acts of mercy or charity ſtrictly ſo called whether that charity be ſhew'd to the bodies or ſouls of men. Now the inſtances and expreſſions of this way of doing good are infinite, as infinite as are the wants and neceſſities of mankind.

To the bodies of men we do good when ever we contribute to the relieving and eaſing them of the outward preſſures and wants, and neceſſities they lie under: Such as Sickneſs, Pain, Poverty, Hunger, Nakedneſs, Debts, Impriſonment, or any other outward affliction that falls upon them; whether that eaſe and relief be effected by our purſe, or by our counſel and advice, or by our labour and pains.

And

And ſure ſome one of theſe three things there is none ſo mean or inconſiderable in the world, but it is in his power to benefit his poor Neighbour with.

To the Souls of men we do good, whenever by our diſcourſes or other endeavours we make men better or wiſer; when we inſtruct the ignorant, when we ſatisfie the doubtful, when we reduce thoſe that are miſled by error, when we eſtabliſh the weak, when we reprove thoſe that do amiſs, in a word, all our attempts and endeavours in what way ſoever to reclaim men from vice, and to bring them to wiſdom and ſobriety is a Charity to their Souls; and whether our deſigns ſucceed or not we ſhall be rewarded as thoſe that have done good in the world.

Secondly, All the acts of Beneficence and kindneſs, nay even of Civility and good Nature, are to be accounted among the inſtances of doing good. A man doth good not only by acts of Charity properly ſo called, but by every courteſie that he doth to another; He doth good by ſhewing his reſpect and good will to all about him, by reconciling differences among neighbours, and promoting peace, friendſhip and ſociety as much as he can; by being Generous and Liberal and Hoſpitable according to his ability; by forgiving injuries, and if it be poſſible making friends of thoſe that did them; by being

being eaſie of acceſs, and ſweet and obliging in his carriage; by complying with the infirmities of thoſe he converſeth with, and in a word, by contributing any way to make the lives of others more eaſie and comfortable to them.

Thirdly, A man alſo doth good when he makes uſe of that acquaintance or friendſhip or intereſt, that he hath with others to ſtir them up to the doing of that good which he by reaſon of the narrowneſs of his condition, or for want of Opportunity cannot do himſelf. This is a very conſiderable inſtance of doing good how ſlight ſoever it may ſeem; the man that exerciſes himſelf this way is doubly a benefactor; for he is not only an inſtrument of good to the perſon or perſons for whom he beg'd the kindneſs or the charity; but he does alſo a real kindneſs to the man himſelf whom he puts upon the benefaction, for God will not leſs reward his good will for being excited by another.

Fourthly, Another way to do good is to be careful and diligent, and conſcientious in the diſcharge of all thoſe Publick Offices which we are call'd upon to execute in the place where we live. How burthenſome ſoever theſe be, and how much ſoever of our time they rob us of, yet God by calling us to them, hath put a *prize into our hands*, (as the Wiſe man ſpeaks) to do much good *if we have hearts to make uſe thereof*.

Fifthly,

Fifthly, We do good when being in a private Capacity we ſo carry our ſelves in all the Relations in which we ſtand as the nature of the Relation requireth. As for inſtance, when being Subjects we conſcientiouſly obey the Laws of the Kingdom and ſubmit to our Governours, and promote what we can the publick Peace both of Church and State. When being Maſters of Families we take care of thoſe under our Charge, making ſufficient proviſion both for their Souls and bodies: When being Huſbands or Wives we diſcharge faithfully all the Conjugal duties: When being Parents we love our children, and *bring them up in the fear and nurture of the Lord.* When being children *we obey our Parents in all things.* When being ſervants *we do our work in ſingleneſs of heart, not as men-pleaſers but as thoſe that account they have a Maſter in Heaven.* When having contracted friendſhips we are ſecret and faithful, and prudent in the maintaining and preſerving of them; and ſo proportionably in all the other relations that we ſtand in. All theſe things though they appear little, yet are they in their degree a real good and benefit to mankind, and ſo neceſſary that there is no living tolerably without them.

Sixthly, We alſo do good by an honeſt and a diligent purſuit of our calling and employment. There is no Art or Trade that we are bred to, but if it be a lawful one, it may be of great uſe to the pub-

publick, and by well minding it, and fairly managing it we may render our ſelves very profitable members of the Common-wealth.

Seventhly and Laſtly, We may do a great deal of good by our good Examples, by being to others Patterns of Piety and Prudence, of Diligence and Induſtry, of Peaceableneſs and Loyalty, of Humility and Meekneſs and Temperance. In a word, every man that will make himſelf Eminent in any Virtue will be a Light to the world, his life will be a conſtant Sermon, and he will often prove as effectual a Benefactor to thoſe about him by his example as others are by their Counſels and Exhortations.

And now all theſe things conſidered, who is there among us in ſuch deplorable Circumſtances that he can reaſonably pretend to want ability or opportunity to *do good in his life?* Sure I am he muſt live in a deſart, and have no Communication with mankind that cannot ſome or other of theſe ways be uſeful and beneficial to them. And thus much of our Second Head of Diſcourſe.

I now come in the Third and laſt place to make ſome Application of what hath been ſpoken.

And Firſt, Since every man is ſo highly concern'd as we have ſeen, to do good in his life, let us all be perſwaded ſeriouſly and heartily to apply our minds hereunto. Let us look upon it, not as a by-

work, a thing to be done now and then as there is occasion after our own turns are served: But let us lay out our selves upon it, let us propose it to our selves as the great Business of our lives. Let us take all opportunities for it, let us contrive and manage all our affairs so that they may some way or other be subservient to the carrying on this great work.

Let this be the end of our gathering riches, and the measure of our expending them. To heap up riches that we may be rich, or to throw them away upon our lusts are both equally intolerable, it is the doing good with them that sanctifies both the getting and the spending them.

Let this be the compass to steer and direct us in our pursuit after knowledge, in our learning Arts and Sciences, in the managery of our Trades and employments; in a word, in the choice and in the prosecution of every design that is proposed to us. In all these things, the great enquiry is to be, what good will they tend to? How shall we be rendred more useful to the world, if our designs and endeavours as to these matters do take effect?

Let this be the great rule by which we proceed in the Education of our Children and Relations, and the provisions we make for them in the world. Let it be our first care to possess them with a deep sense of the duty they owe to the Publick, and to furnish them with such qualities as will render them profitable members of it, and to put them into such profes-

ons and employments as may afford them fair ſcope for the exerciſe of thoſe qualities. If we thus provide for them, though we otherwiſe leave them never ſo ſmall an Eſtate, yet with the Bleſſing of God they have a good Portion.

Laſtly, let this deſign of doing good influence our very Offices of Religion. When we make our applications to the Throne of Grace, let us be ſure to have the Publick always in mind; and even when we pray for our ſelves let it be with this deſign and reſolution, that as God in mercy beſtows upon us the Bleſſings and the Grace we pray for, we will employ them for the good of others.

O that we would thus ſeriouſly concern our ſelves in doing good! O that we would once lay aſide all our little ſelfiſh deſigns, and that narrowneſs and penuriouſneſs of Spirit with which moſt of us are bound up; and with ardent Love and Charity ſet our ſelves *not to ſeek his own but every man anothers good*, as the Apoſtle exhorteth. 1 Cor. 10. 24.

Secondly, if the doing good be ſo neceſſary a duty as hath been repreſented, what muſt we ſay of thoſe men that frame to themſelves Models of Chriſtianity without putting this duty into its notion? There is a ſort of Chriſtianity which hath obtained in the world, that is made up of Faith and knowledge of the Goſpel Myſteries, without any reſpect to Charity and good works. Nay have we not heard of a ſort of Chriſtianity, the very perfection of which

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seems to consist in the disparaging this duty of doing good as much as is possible; crying it down as a heathen virtue, a poor blind piece of Morality, a thing that will no way further our salvation; nay, so far from that, that it often proves a hindrance to it, by taking us off from that full relyance and recumbency that we ought to have on the Righteousness of Jesus Christ only, in order to our Salvation.

But O how contrary are these Doctrines to the Doctrine of Christ and his Apostles! How widely different a thing do they make Christianity to be from what it will appear if we take our notions of it from their Sermons and Practices! Is it possible that he that went about doing good himself; made it his meat and drink, the business and employment of his life, should set so light by it in us that are his followers?

Is it possible that they that so often call upon us *to do good, to be rich in good works, above all things to have fervent charity among our selves*, telling us that all *faith is nothing, all knowledge of Mysteries* is nothing, all gifts of *Prophecy* and *Miracles* are nothing, but that *Charity* is all in all, I say is it possible that they should think doing good so insignificant, so unprofitable, nay so dangerous a thing as these I spoke of do represent it?

1. Tim. 6. 18. 1 Pet. 4. 8. 1 Cor. 13. 2, 13.

But I need not further reprove these Opinions because I hope they find but few Patrons; but this seriously ought to be reproved among us, *viz.* that we do not generally lay that stress upon this duty we are speaking of that we ought to do. Many

Many are ready enough to acknowledge their Obligations to do good, and count it a very commendable thing, and a work that God will bleſs them the better for, yet they are loth to make it an eſſential ingredient of their Religion, they think they may be Religious and ſerve God without it. If they be but ſober in their lives, and juſt in their dealings and come to Church at the uſual times, they have Religion enough to carry them to Heaven, though in the mean time they continue covetous and hard and uncharitable, without bowels of pity and compaſſion, and make no uſe of their wealth, or their power and intereſt, or their Parts and induſtry, or their other Talents committed to them, for the doing good in the world.

Far be it from any man to pretend to determine what vertues or degrees of them are preciſely neceſſary to Salvation, and what Vertues or degrees of them a man may ſafely be without: But this is certain, that charity and doing good are none of thoſe that can be ſpared. The Scripture hath every where declared theſe qualities to be as neceſſary in order to our Salvation as any condition of the Goſpel. Nay if we will conſult St. *Matth.* 25. where the Proceſs of the General Judgment is deſcribed, we ſhall find theſe to be the great points that at the laſt day men ſhall be examined upon, and upon which the whole caſe of their eternal ſtate will turn. So that if we take the Scripture for our Guide, theſe men at laſt will

will be found to be much miſtaken, and to have made a very falſe judgment both of Religion and of their own condition.

Thirdly, From what hath been ſaid about doing good, we may gather wherein that Perfection of Chriſtianity which we are to aſpire after, doth conſiſt. It has been much diſputed which is the moſt Perfect life, to live in the world as other men do, and to ſerve God in following our employments, and taking care of our families, and doing good offices to our neighbors, and diſcharging all other duties that our relation to the publick requires of us; or to retire from the world, and to quit all our ſecular concernments, and wholly to give up our ſelves to Prayer and Meditation, and thoſe other exerciſes of Religion properly ſo called.

This latter kind of life is ſo magnified by the *Romaniſts* in compariſon of the other, that it hath engroſſed to it ſelf the name of Religious. None among them are thought worthy to be ſtyled Religious perſons but thoſe that Cloyſter up themſelves in a Monaſtery. But whatever excellence may be pretended in this courſe of life, it certainly falls much ſhort of that which is led in a publick way. He ſerves God beſt that is moſt ſerviceable to his Generation. And no Prayers or Faſts or Mortifications are near ſo acceptable a Sacrifice to our Heavenly Father as to *do good in our lives*.

It is true, to keep within doors and to attend our devo-

devotions (though thoſe that are in appearance moſt abſtracted from the world, are not always the moſt devout perſons) I ſay this kind of life is the moſt eaſie and the ſafer. A man is not then expoſed ſo much to temptations; he may with leſs difficulty preſerve his innocence; but where is the praiſe of ſuch a vertue? Vertue is then moſt glorious and ſhall be moſt rewarded, when it meets with moſt tryals and oppoſitions.

And as for the bravery of contemning the world and all the Pomps of it, which they ſo magnifie in this kind of life, alas it is rather an effect of puſillanimity and love of our eaſe, and a deſire to be free from cares and burdens, than of any true nobleneſs of mind. If we would live to excellent purpoſe indeed; if we would ſhew true bravery of ſpirit and true piety towards God, let us live as our bleſſed Lord and his Apoſtles did. Let us not fly Temptations but overcome them; let us not ſit at home amuſing our ſelves with our pleaſing contemplations, when we may be uſeful and beneficial abroad. Let us ſoorder our devotions towards God, that they may be a means of promoting our worldly buſineſs and affairs, and doing good among men. Let us take our fit times of retirement and abſtraction that we may the more freely converſe with God and pour out our ſouls before him; but let this be only to the end that we may appear abroad again more brisk and lively in vanquiſhing the Temptations that come in our

way.

will be found to be much mistaken, and to have made a very false judgment both of Religion and of their own condition.

Thirdly, From what hath been said about doing good, we may gather wherein that Perfection of Christianity which we are to aspire after, doth consist. It has been much disputed which is the most Perfect life, to live in the world as other men do, and to serve God in following our employments, and taking care of our families, and doing good offices to our neighbors, and discharging all other duties that our relation to the publick requires of us; or to retire from the world, and to quit all our secular concernments, and wholly to give up our selves to Prayer and Meditation, and those other exercises of Religion properly so called.

This latter kind of life is so magnified by the *Romanists* in comparison of the other, that it hath engrossed to it self the name of Religious. None among them are thought worthy to be styled Religious persons but those that Cloyster up themselves in a Monastery. But whatever excellence may be pretended in this course of life, it certainly falls much short of that which is led in a publick way. He serves God best that is most serviceable to his Generation. And no Prayers or Fasts or Mortifications are near so acceptable a Sacrifice to our Heavenly Father as to *do good in our lives.*

It is true, to keep within doors and to attend our devo-

devotions (though thoſe that are in appearance moſt abſtracted from the world, are not always the moſt devout perſons) I ſay this kind of life is the moſt eaſie and the ſafer. A man is not then expoſed ſo much to temptations; he may with leſs difficulty preſerve his innocence; but where is the praiſe of ſuch a vertue? Vertue is then moſt glorious and ſhall be moſt rewarded, when it meets with moſt tryals and oppoſitions.

And as for the bravery of contemning the world and all the Pomps of it, which they ſo magnifie in this kind of life, alas it is rather an effect of puſillanimity and love of our eaſe, and a deſire to be free from cares and burdens, than of any true nobleneſs of mind. If we would live to excellent purpoſe indeed; if we would ſhew true bravery of ſpirit and true piety towards God, let us live as our bleſſed Lord and his Apoſtles did. Let us not fly Temptations but overcome them; let us not ſit at home amuſing our ſelves with our pleaſing contemplations, when we may be uſeful and beneficial abroad. Let us ſo order our devotions towards God, that they may be a means of promoting our worldly buſineſs and affairs, and doing good among men. Let us take our fit times of retirement and abſtraction, that we may the more freely converſe with God and pour out our ſouls before him; but let this be only to the end that we may appear abroad again more brisk and lively in vanquiſhing the Temptations that come in our

way.

way, and more prompt and readily disposed to every good work: This is to imitate our Lord Jesus, to walk as we have him for an example. This is a life most suitable to the contrivance and the genius of his Religion, which is more accommodated to Cities and publick Societies, than to Cloysters and Deserts. And lastly this is to walk in a conformity to his command who hath bid us *make our light so to shine before men that they may see our good works and glorifie our Father which is in Heaven.*

Mat. 5. 16.

But Fourthly and lastly, If it be a thing so necessary that every man should do good in his life as hath been represented, then how much to be Reproved are they that do no good till their death! That live scrapingly and uncharitably and uselesly to the world all their lives long, and then when they come to dye, think to Atone for their sins and neglects of this kind, by shewing some extraordinary Bounty to the poor, or devoting some part of their estates to publick or pious uses.

I must confess this kind of proceeding doth to me seem just like the business of putting off a mans repentance to his death-bed. It is absolutely necessary that a man should repent though it be never so late; and so it is that he should do good: if he have done little good in his life, he is bound as he loves his soul to shew some extraordinary uncommon instances of Charity and a Publick spirit, when he comes to die. But then it is here as it is with the long

delay-

delaying of Repentance, the deferring it ſo long has robbed the man of the greateſt part of the praiſe and the comfort he might have expected from it. His Rewards in heaven will be much leſs though his good deeds ſhould be accepted, but he is infinitely uncertain whether they will or no. It muſt be a very great act of Generoſity and Charity that can obtain a pardon for a whole life of uncharitableneſs.

Let us all therefore labour and ſtudy *to do good in our lives*, let us be daily giving evidences to the world of our kind and charitable diſpoſition, and let not that be the firſt which is diſcovered in our laſt Will and teſtament. If God hath bleſſed us with worldly goods, let us diſtribute them as we ſee occaſion in our life time, when every one may ſee we do it voluntarily; and not ſtay till we muſt be forced to part with them whether we will or no, for that will blaſt the credit of our good deeds both with God and man.

I have ſaid enough concerning the firſt point recommended in the Text, *viz. doing Good*. I now come briefly to Treat of the other, that is, *Rejoycing*, which is equally a part of the buſineſs of this day.

There is no good (ſaith *Solomon*) *in any earthly thing*; or *there is nothing better for any man than to rejoyce and to do good.*

The *Rejoycing* here recommended, is capable of two ſences, the firſt more general and more concerning us as Chriſtians, the other more particular and which more immediately concerns us as we are here met upon this occaſion.

In the first place by *Rejoycing* we may take to be meant, a constant habit of joy and chearfulness, so that we are always contented and well pleased, always free from those anxieties and disquiets and uncomfortable reflections that make the lives of mankind miserable. This now is the Perfection of *Rejoycing* and it is the utmost degree of Happiness that we are here capable of. It must be granted indeed that not many do arrive to this state, but yet I doubt not but that it is a state that may be attained at least in a great measure in this world. Otherwise the Holy men in Scripture, and particularly the Apostles of our Lord would never have recommended it to us so often as they have done. *Rejoyce evermore*, saith S. *Paul* to the *Thessalonians*, and to the *Philippians*, *Rejoyce in the Lord always, and again I say rejoyce.*

1 Thess. 5. 16. Phil. 4. 4.

The way to attain to this happy condition doth consist chiefly in these three things: First a great innocence and virtue, a behaving our selves so in the world that our Consciences shall not reproach us. This St. *Paul* lays as the Foundation of *Rejoycing*, *This* (saith he) *is our rejoycing, the Testimony of our Conscience that in simplicity and godly sincerity I have had my conversation in this world.* It is in vain to think of any true solid Joy or Peace or Contentment without a hearty practice of all the duties of our Religion, so that we can satisfie our selves of our own sincerity before God.

2 Cor. 1. 12.

And then secondly to make us capable of this constant Rejoycing besides the innocence of our lives there must go a firm and hearty perswasion of Gods parti-

particular Providence; a belief that he not only diſpenſeth all events that come to paſs in the world, even the moſt inconſiderable; but that the meaſure of the Diſpenſations of his Providence is infinite Wiſdom and Goodneſs and nothing elſe: ſo that nothing doth or ever can happen to us in particular, or to the world in general but what is for the beſt. Now when we firmly believe this and frequently attend to it, how can we be either ſolicitous for the future or diſcontented at the preſent events of things, let them fall out never ſo croſs to our deſires and expectations? This is the beſt Antidote in the world (and an effectual one it is) againſt all trouble and vexation and uneaſineſs that can happen to us upon any occaſion whatſoever, to wit, the conſideration that all things are managed by an infinitely Wiſe and good God, and will at laſt prove for the beſt, how unaccountable ſoever they appear to us at preſent. And this is that which the wiſe man inſinuates in the verſe before the Text when he ſaith that *God hath made every thing beautiful in his ſeaſon.*

Thirdly, Another requiſite both for the procuring and preſerving this continual chearfulneſs and rejoycing, is a frequent and fixed attention to the great rewards of the other world, which God hath promiſed to all that truly love him and endeavour to pleaſe him. This conſideration will extreamly add to our comfort and contribute to our Rejoycing under all the miſeries and afflictions that we can poſſibly fall into, namely, that whatſoever condition we are in here

we ſhall certainly in a little time be in a moſt happy and glorious one, and the worſe our circumſtances are in this life, the greater (if we be good) ſhall be our happineſs in the next, for *theſe light afflictions* (as S. *Paul* tells us) *which indure but for a moment, do work for us a far more exceeding weight of glory.*

2 *Cor.* 4. 17.

This then is the joy that we are to endeavour after in the firſt place, to be conſtantly well pleas'd and contented with our preſent condition, whatever it be, and theſe are the ways to attain to it.

But ſecondly, there is another more particular Notion of *Rejoycing*, and which I conceive *Solomon* doth chiefly intend in the words of the Text, and that is the free and comfortable enjoyment of the good things of this life that God hath bleſſed us with, in oppoſition to a pinching and penurious way of living. This I ſay ſeems to be the notion of *Rejoycing* that the Text ſpeaks of, as appears by the following verſe. *Solomon* having told us in the text, that there is nothing better for a man than to *rejoyce* and *do good*, he adds by way of explication of what he meant by *rejoycing*, theſe words, *that every man ſhould eat and drink and enjoy the good of all his labours, for it is the gift of God.* And frequently in this Book of *Eccleſiaſtes* doth he perſwade to this kind of rejoycing. Thus in *Chap.* 2. *ver.* 24. *there is nothing better for a man, than that he ſhould eat and drink, and that he ſhould make his ſoul enjoy good in his labour, this alſo I ſaw it was from the hand of God.* And in *Chap.* 5. *v.* 18. *Behold that which I have ſeen, it is good and comely for one to eat and drink,*

drink, and to enjoy the good of all his labours that he taketh under the sun all the days of his life which God giveth him, for it is his portion. And in *Chap. 6. v.* 1, 2. he represents it as a *great evil that he hath seen under the sun, and yet such an evil as is common among men, that a man to whom God hath given riches, and wealth, and honour, so that he wanteth nothing for his soul of all that he desireth, yet God giveth him not power to eat thereof, but a stranger eateth it, this* (saith he) *is vanity and an evil disease.*

And there is certainly great reason in what he saith. For to have a plentiful portion of the good things of this life, and not to have the heart to make use of them for the enjoyment of our selves and friends; for the refreshing us under the toyl that this life doth expose us to; for the promoting Acquaintance and Society; and the rendering our condition as easie as may be, is as unaccountable a folly as we can be guilty of, and makes us really as poor and necessitous as those that want bread, but only not so pitiable.

Taking now this to be the sence of *rejoycing* in the Text, (as I believe it is) we have from hence a good warrant for this days Meeting, for we come together to *rejoyce* in *Solomons* sence, that is, *to eat and drink and to enjoy the good of our labours*, it being *the gift of God* so to do.

And this practice of ours is not only reasonable in it self, but is commended to us by the example of Gods people both under the Law and the Gospel. The *Jews* by the appointment of God himself were to meet every year three times at *Jerusalem*, the Capital City

See *Deut.* 16. City of the Nation *to feast and to rejoyce before the Lord*, as we have it in the expreſs words of *Moſes*. And the Chriſtians for near two hundred years after our Saviour had their *Agapæ*, their Feaſts of charity wherein they met together both poor and rich to enjoy and make merry one with another. It is true theſe Feaſts were at length left off by common conſent, becauſe there grew abuſes in them; they became occaſions of Luxury and exceſs, and ſo matters of ſcandal to our Religion. But this was not an ill reflection upon the thing it ſelf, which was innocent and commendable, but upon the *abuſe* of the thing. A good and laudable inſtitution was perverted to evil purpoſes. However this very conſideration ought to make us very careful of our carriage and behaviour in theſe our Meetings, leſt we fall under the ſame inconveniencies, which that we may prevent, Two things are eſpecially needful to be taken care of by us.

First, That we do not exceed the bounds of *rejoycing* preſcribed to Chriſtians, that is, that we avoid all exceſs, and uſe the Creatures of God, ſoberly and temperately, ſo as to give offence to none, nor to *make proviſion for the fleſh to fulfil the luſts thereof.*

And ſecondly, That we take care to perform and make good the ends and deſigns of theſe *Feaſts* of *rejoycing*; which ends, if we will take our meaſures from thoſe Laws that God gave to his own People in the Old Teſtament, and which the modern *Jews* themſelves in their Commentaries take notice of; and which are

ſo

so reasonable in themselves that without any Authority they do recommend themselves to us, are these four following.

First, That we Rejoyce before the Lord, that is, that we make our humble acknowledgments and return our due praises and thanks to him for all the good things he hath blessed us with in our lives, confessing that all we have is from his free bounty and goodness, and that our Meeting together is to praise his name upon that account. And this was the thing that was meant by those solemn Sacrifices that the *Jews* were bound to offer at *Jerusalem* at their Annual Feasts.

The second end of these Feasts is to take occasion from hence to learn our duty, to be instructed in all the branches of that obedience we owe unto God. For as *Maimonides* observes, that was one of the principal reasons of God's calling together all the people of the *Jews* to appear at the Feast of Tabernacles, to wit, that they might hear the Law read unto them; and this design is I suppose pursued by us in our chusing this Place to Assemble in.

A third end of these Feasts (as the same *Maimonides* tells us) & is manifest from Scripture is to promote acquaintance & Friendship, and brotherly love one with another. And this is a very noble end, and serves many excellent purposes, and nothing can be beyond it except

The fourth and last end of these Meetings, which is to *do good*; to exercise our Charity towards our poor indigent Brethren. No man at the Solemn Feasts of the

Jews,

Exod. 23. 15. *Jews, was to appear before the Lord empty.* He was to bring his offering not only to God by way of recognition and acknowledgment to him: but for the poor also that they might rejoyce as well as he. This is well observed by *Maimonides* from *Deut.* 16. 14. where it is thus said, *Thou shalt rejoyce in thy feast, thou and thy son, and thy daughter, thy man-servant and thy maid-servant, the Levite and the stranger, the fatherless and the widow that are within thy gates.*

This then is the great end of our Assembly, that not only we, but the Fatherless and the widow; all of our Countrey, that need our Charity, may *rejoyce* with us and for us. And this is that which *Solomon* joyns with *rejoycing* in the Text, *There is no good in them but for a man to rejoyce and do good*: and what that man who by the sentence of God was declared the wisest of all men hath thus joyned together, let none of us presume to put asunder. These are the Rules, and these are the ends that we are to observe in this our Feast; and let us all for the Honour of Christs Religion, and for the credit of our particular Countrey, charge the observation of them upon our selves: which if we can all resolve to do, I can safely apply to every one of you, that saying of *Solomon* in the *9th* Chapter of this book of *Ecclesiastes*, and the *7th* verse, with which I shall conclude: *Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart; for God now accepteth thy work.*

ERRATA.

PAge 8. l. 6. *it that*, r. *it is that.* p. 9 l penult. for *in* r. *is.* p. 13. l. 10. r. *proposed.* p. 14. l. 23, 24. for *lay*, r. *ly.*

FINIS.

A

SERMON

PREACHED

Before the Right Honourable

THE

Lord MAYOR

AND

ALDERMEN

OF

LONDON

At the SPITTLE,

April 14. 1680.

By *JOHN SHARPE*, D. D. Rector of St. *Giles* in the Fields, and Chaplain to the Right Honourable the Lord High Chancellour of *England*.

LONDON,

Printed for *Walter Kettilby* at the *Bishop's-Head*, in St. *Paul's* Church-Yard. 1680.

To the Right Honourable

Sir *ROBERT CLAYTON*,

Lord MAYOR

OF

LONDON,

And to His

LADY.

RIGHT HONOURABLE,

I Make bold to prefix both Your Names to this Sermon, though it was at Your Requeſt, MADAM, *that I publiſhed it, not only becauſe I have received many Obligations from You both, which I take this Opportunity to acknowledge and thank You for: But alſo becauſe You are both known to be*

Eminent Examples of that Virtue which is in the following Discourse Recommended. May all in Your Circumstances imitate You herein; and may You always be in a condition to be Patterns to others. Thus prayeth,

Your most Obliged
and Humble Servant,

J. SHARPE.

A SERMON PREACHED At the SPITTLE.

1 Tim. vi. 17, 18, 19.

Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy.

That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate.

Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come that they may lay hold on eternal life.

GROTIUS his Note upon this Text is this, that St. *Paul* now having finished this his Epistle to *Timothy*, it comes into his mind that there was need of some more particular application to be made, and admonition to be given to those Wealthy Merchants, with which the City of *Ephesus* (where *Timothy* resided) did then

abound; and upon this consideration he inserts those words I have now read, *charge them that are rich in this world*, &c.

How famous soever the City of *Ephesus* was at that time for Wealth or Trade; there is little doubt to be made, that this City of ours (praised be God for it) doth in those respects, at this day, equal, if not much exceed it. And therefore that which S. *Paul* thought of so great importance as to give especial orders to *Timothy*, to press upon the *Ephesian* Citizens, will always be very fit to be seriously recommended to you in this place; and more especially at this time, since it is the proper work of the day. Waving therefore wholly the argument of our Saviours *Resurrection*, upon which you have before been entertained; I apply my self without farther preface to conclude this *Easter*-Solemnity with that, with which St. *Paul* concludes his Epistle, *viz.* with a short discourse of the *Rich mans great duty and concernment*, which is in these words plainly set forth to us.

In them we may take notice of these three Generals, which I shall make the heads of my following discourse.

First, The duty it self incumbent upon those *that are rich in this world*, expressed in several particulars.

Secondly, the great Obligation that lies upon them to the performance of it, which we may gather

ther from the vehemence and the Authority with which St. *Paul* orders *Timothy* to preſs it, *charge them* (ſaith he) *that are rich, that they be not*, &c.

Thirdly, the mighty encouragement they have to obſerve this *charge*, for hereby, *they lay up to themſelves in ſtore a good foundation againſt the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.*

First, I begin with the Rich mans duty, which is here expreſſed in Four points, two of them *Negative*, teaching what things he ought to avoid; the other two *poſitive*, teaching what he ought to practiſe. They are theſe,

I. *That he ſhould not be high minded.*
II. *That he ſhould not truſt in uncertain riches.*
III. *That he ſhould truſt in the living God.*
IV. *That he ſhould do good, be rich in good works*, &c.

The Firſt thing that is given in charge to all thoſe that are *rich in this world*, is that *they be not high minded*, μὴ ὑψηλοφρονεῖν, that they do not think too well of themſelves for being rich, and take occaſion from thence to deſpiſe others that are in meaner circumſtances than they. They are not to value themſelves a jot the more, or to think worſe of others upon account of that outward fortune they are poſſeſſed of, but are in all their converſation to

expreſs the ſame moderation and humanity and calineſs and obligingneſs of temper to thoſe they have to do with, even the meaneſt and the pooreſt, as if they ſtood with them upon the ſame level.

And with very great reaſon hath St. *Paul* given this caution to rich men. For by the experience of the world it hath been always found, that wealth is apt to puff up, to make men look big, and to breed in them a contempt of others; but what little ground there is for this, is eaſily ſeen by any that will give themſelves leave to conſider.

For what doth any of theſe worldly goods (which make us keep at diſtance) really add to a man in point of true worth and value? do they either recommend him more to God or to wiſe men or even to himſelf, if he have a grain of ſenſe in him, than if he was without them? certainly they do not. For that for which either God approves us, or wiſe men eſteem us, or we can ſpeak peace and content to our ſelves, is not any thing without us, any thing that fortune hath given to us; but ſomething that we may more truly call our own, ſomething that we were neither born with, nor could any body hinder us of, nor can be taken from us, that is to ſay, the Riches of our minds, our Virtuous and commendable qualities.

A man is no more a fit object of eſteem, meerly for being rich, than the beaſt he rides on (if I may uſe

uſe the old compariſon) is of commendation for the coſtly Trappings he wears.

Secondly, Another caution given to thoſe that are rich in this world, is, *that they ſhould not truſt in uncertain riches.* This likewiſe is a temptation to which they are expoſed, and our Saviour hath very lively ſet it forth to us in the Parable of the *Rich man* in the Goſpel, who having got mighty poſſeſſions, and filled his barns, thought of nothing further; but preſently ſaith to himſelf, *ſoul take thy eaſe, eat, drink and be merry, for thou haſt goods laid up for many years*: But the concluſion of that parable doth ſufficiently ſhew the vanity and ridiculouſneſs of this *truſting in our riches*, for a meſſage comes to him from God, *Thou fool, this night ſhall thy ſoul be required of thee, and then whoſe ſhall all theſe things be that thou haſt provided?* It is the greateſt madneſs in the world to pleaſe, or ſpeak peace to our ſelves upon account of that, which we are not ſure to enjoy a day, but we may for any thing we know be ſnatch'd away the next moment into another world, and ſo muſt leave the joy and pride of our hearts to we know not whom. Luke 12. 16, &c.

But ſuppoſing we had ſome certainty of our lives, and could promiſe our ſelves that we ſhould not leave our wealth for ſome competent time, yet we have no certainty that our wealth will not leave

us.

us. How prosperous soever our present circumstances be, yet we cannot ensure the continuance of them; there are a thousand accidents may happen every day which may strip us as naked as when we came into the world; and we may be reduced to the extremities of those who are now the greatest objects of our compassion and charity; and this is that which St. *Paul* in the Text insinuates when he calls them *uncertain riches*. But what are we then to trust in, if not in these things? this St. *Paul* shews in the words following which make

The Third instance of the Rich mans duty, *Let them* (saith he) *trust in the living God, who giveth to all men richly to enjoy*. The sence of it is this: Let them from the bottom of their hearts acknowledge God to be the Author and giver of all that they possess: How much soever their Heads projected, or their Hands laboured, or their Parents and Friends were kind to them; yet it is the Providence of the Almighty to which they owe all. The same divine foresight and contrivance that feeds the Fowls of the air, and clothes the Flowers of the field, doth also *give them richly all things to enjoy*; and therefore upon that Providence are they entirely to depend, as much exercising Faith in God, and reposing confidence in him, as if they had no visible provisions made for them: And as heartily returning thanks to their great

great Benefactor for every bleſſing they have (ſeem it never ſo much their own already,) as a hungry man that knows not where to get a meal, would to him that ſhould give him a plentiful entertainment. In a word, thoſe that have all things in this world muſt as devoutly look up to God, both in gratefully aſcribing to him every enjoyment either paſt or preſent, and in a full truſt and relyance upon him for what is to come, as thoſe that live from hand to mouth; ſince it is the ſame divine Providence that feeds and maintains both the Poor and the Rich, and of his infinite goodneſs gives to all that fear him, even to the poor as well as the rich, all things to enjoy; and though to the one more plentifully, yet to the other perhaps with as much content though not in ſo great abundance.

The Fourth and laſt part of the Rich mans duty here mentioned concerns the right uſe of that wealth that God hath given him. Now the right uſe of Riches according to the Text doth conſiſt in theſe things. That thoſe that have them *do good* with them, *that they be rich in good works*, that they be *ready to diſtribute*, *willing to communicate*.

If we ſuppoſe every one of theſe diſtinct phraſes in the Text, to denote a diſtinct thing, then we are to give this account of the paſſage, That S. Paul here uſeth a gradation in his ſpeech, begins with the

the lowest and most general expressions of Charity, and so goes on to higher degrees of it; in each following phrase intending to say something more great or particular than what he had said in the former, which is a most usual and elegant scheme of Rhetorick. According to this account (as the words are very capable of it) there are four things here prescribed to the rich man in the use of his riches.

1. That he do good with them, that is the most general point, that is, that he imploy them some way or other for the benefit of others. He must not live to himself alone, he must design greater things than the getting an estate, or the raising a family; if others be not advantaged by him, he is rich to no purpose. And therefore it will concern him to do kindnesses and good offices where he can, to be liberal and Hospitable, to oblige his Friends and Relations all ways possible, to assist all about him with his counsel, to encourage them by his example; in a word, to make use of that Interest and Reputation that his fortune hath given him above others, to do kindnesses to them.

2. He must not think it sufficient to do this good now and then, upon particular and more rare occasions; but he must abound in acts of goodness. That is the meaning of the Apostles second expression of being *rich in good works*. He must so study and improve in the Art of doing good, that

his

his good deeds do equal his riches, nay the words import that his true riches are only placed in, and to be measured by his good deeds. He is not to think himself farther rich than he is rich in good works. The more plentifully God hath blessed him with worldly wealth, the more diligent and industrious and solicitous he must be to do good with it, otherwise he is poorer than those that perhaps he now and then out of charity relieves.

And 3*ly*, Lest this *doing good*, and *being rich in good works* should only be interpreted of doing such kindnesses and good deeds that cost us nothing but the expence of our time or the employment of our pains, or the use of our interest with others; the Apostle adds this further thing, that the Rich man must be *ready to distribute*; that is, very free to part with his money according to the proportion God hath blessed him with, upon every occasion of real and useful charity; whether that charity be of a more publick nature, as for instance, when it is expressed for the advancing Religion and the service of God, or for the making standing provisions for the poor, or lastly, any way for the serving the necessities, or increasing the conveniencies of the place where we live, by any publick useful benefaction: Or 2*ly*, whether this charity be of a more private nature, extending no farther than to particular persons that come in our way, whom

we are convinced to be real objects of it; to these likewise we must be ready to distribute; every poor necessitous person hath a right to part of what we have, if we can really satisfie our selves, that our alms will do him a real good, and will not be any great prejudice to us.

But 4*thly* and lastly, the Apostle adds another thing to all this, and that is, that the Rich man must *be willing to communicate*. If the sence of this phrase be different from the former it will seem to import yet a higher degree of Liberality. It will import that Rich men should be of such publick spirits and so little esteem their wealth their own, that it should in a manner be made a *common* thing, where in all should share as there was occasion. This is the notion of κοινωνία or *communicating*, as it was used in the beginning of Christianity. S. *Luke* in *Acts* 2. having told us that the first Christians continued in the Apostles doctrine, and in communicating, presently explains what he meant by that communion. *All* (saith he *v.* 44.) *that believed were together and had all things common, and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men as every man had need.*

God be thanked the Church of Christ is not now in such circumstances that it is either needful or reasonable precisely to observe the practice of those times as to this matter. We are not only not obliged to

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part with the propriety of our estate, and to live in common as the first persecuted Christians did, but we should be highly indiscreet, not to say injurious both to our selves and the publick, if we did. But this notwithstanding, their practice and the charge here laid upon us to be *communicative* will thus far oblige us, *viz.* that we Christians should always retain that publick generous spirit that they in the first times were acted with. We should sit so loose from the world, and so unconcerned in the distinction of *meum* and *tuum*, that we should make it our business to do good with what we have, thinking our wealth best employed when it is put to that use. And when the cause of God, and the common interest of our Christian Brethren doth require it, we should then as freely part with all we have as our Predecessors in Christianity did, Following herein the Precept of our Lord to the young man who came to enquire of him what he should do that he might inherit eternal life, and who was thus answered by our Saviour, that though he had kept the Commandments, yet he wanted one thing to make him perfect (that is to make him a True Christian) and that was, *to sell all that he had and give to the poor and come and follow him, and then he should have treasure in Heaven*, Mat. 19. 21.

Thus have I given you a brief account of each particular of the Rich mans duty as it is summ'd up in the Text; and some perhaps will think it is severe enough; whether it be so or no, I now dispute not, but I am sure it is severely required of them. This we may gather from S. *Pauls* way of urging it, *charge them* (saith he) *that are rich in this world that they be not high minded*, &c. He doth not say, recommend this to them as a thing that is very reasonable in it self, and will highly become them; he doth not say, put them in mind of it as a thing by which they may gain a great deal of Honour and reputation to their Religion; he doth not say, exhort and perswade them to it, as a thing that will at last conduce to their own advantage: But he saith, *charge it upon them*, intimating that there was a necessity they should thus practise, it was a duty indispensably incumbent upon all of them; and this is the Second General Point I am to insist on.

And certainly this order of S. *Paul* to *Timothy* is a standing warrant, a perpetual commission to all Ministers of the Gospel to charge the same thing upon all Rich men in all places and times. But in the pressing and enforcing this charge I shall not so much have regard to the three former duties as to the last, which concerns the doing good with our wealth, the exercising acts of Bounty and Charity

Charity as we have opportunity. *Charge them that are rich in this world, that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate.*

Now in Four respects especially, Rich men are thus to be charged, and a necessity lies upon them to practise accordingly, *viz.*

In point of { *Gratitude,* *Justice,* *Religion,* *Self-preservation.*

If all these put together do not make the obligation indispensable I know not what will. I will speak briefly of each particular,

First, if Rich men do not thus employ their wealth, they are guilty of great *Ingratitude.* That is the least evil imputation they fall under, and yet to any ingenuous man it is heavy enough, for to call a man *Unthankful* is as great a reproach as you can cast upon him.

Whoever acknowledgeth the Being of God, and owns his Providence in the world, must necessarily believe that all that portion of good things which he enjoys in this life doth proceed from that God as the Author and Fountain, though they be immediately conveyed to him by the Ministery of second

cond Cauſes; and his Reaſon and Humanity will ſuggeſt to him, that there are ſome returns of Gratitude to be made to *Him* that of his free bounty hath thus obliged him; but what returns can he make to God for his bleſſings, other than in communicating thoſe bleſſings among his fellow creatures? To think that a verbal acknowledgment of *God's* favours is a ſuitable return, is againſt the common ſence of mankind, who know that there goes more to a mans being truly grateful than the entertaining the perſon that obliged him with fair ſpeeches and profeſſions of his Obligations: And on the other ſide, to think of requiting God in a proper ſence, by returning real kindneſſes to him, for thoſe he hath done to us, is equally abſurd; for all the ſervices we can pay to him, cannot add any thing to his infinite Bleſſedneſs. How then muſt we expreſs our thankfulneſs for the wealth that he hath beſtowed upon us? why he himſelf hath preſcribed the way to us. He hath devolved his right to our kindneſs upon our Brethren. He hath deputed them to receive the real teſtimonies of our gratitude to him, and whatſoever obligations we put upon them, he takes them as an expreſſion of our Love and thankfulneſs to him.

This our Saviour himſelf hath told us in expreſs words, in the 25 of S. *Matt. Inaſmuch* (ſaith he) *as ye have done it, i. e.* done acts of kindneſs and charity to

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one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me. And the charitable contributions of the Hebrew Christians to their indigent brethren, is by S. *Paul* styled *a work and labour of love shewed to God* himself, *Heb. 6.* If therefore Rich men would not be unkind and ingratefull to him that gave them all they have; there is a necessity they should do good, *&c.*

Secondly, The Practice of this must likewise be charged upon them in point of *Justice* as well as *Gratitude*, it is a piece of dishonesty not to do good with the wealth that God hath given us, for it is a falsifying our trust, it is an embezling our Masters goods, and putting them to quite other uses than those he gave us them for. We are not to think that God ever made a man rich for his own sake alone, for the serving his own turns, and the satisfaction of his own private desires without respect to the community. No at the best we are but the Stewards of Gods blessings. A stock of Talents he hath committed to all of us, to some in greater and to others in smaller proportions, and out of this stock he hath given us leave to make provision for the necessities and conveniencies of our selves and our families; but we must not think all our own that accrues to us, so that it is at our liberty whether we will hoard it up or spend it profusely. No, we must have regard to the rest of our Masters servants. After we have served our own needs we

must

must dispense the surplusage among the family of God, otherwise we are false and wicked Stewards, we abuse and misemploy our Masters Talents, and a severe account we shall one day render for so doing.

Thirdly, Mens Religion and Christianity are also deeply concerned in this point. Works of Charity are so essential to all Religion, and more especially to that which we call Christian, that without them it is but an empty name in whosoever professes it. Let men pretend what they will, let them be never so Orthodox in their belief, or regular in their conversation, or strict in the performance of those duties that relate to the worship of God, yet if they be hard hearted and uncharitable, if God hath given them wealth, and they have not hearts to do good with it, they have no true piety towards God. They may have a name to *live*, but they are really *dead*. An unmerciful Christian, or a Religious covetous man, are terms that imply a contradiction. For the satisfying you of this, I shall but need to put these following questions.

Can that man be accounted Religious that neither loves God nor his neighbour? sure he cannot, for these two things are the whole of Religion as the Holy Scripture often assures us; but now the Covetous man neither doth the one nor the other. His neighbors he doth not love, that is certain; for

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If he did they would find some fruits of it; unleſs this be to be accounted love to give them good words, *to ſay to a brother or a ſiſter that is naked and deſtitute of daily food, depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled, when notwithſtanding they give them not thoſe things that be needful for the body.* But this kind of love S. *James* hath long ago declared not to be worth any thing! And as for the love of God another Apoſtle hath put it out of doubt, that the uncharitable man hath no ſuch thing in him. *Whoſo* (ſaith S. *John*) *hath this worlds good and ſeeth his brother have need, and ſhutteth up his bowels of compaſſion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? For he that loveth not his brother whom he hath ſeen, how can he love God whom he hath not ſeen?* James 2. 14. &c. 1 John 3. 17. cap. 4. 20.

Can he be thought a Religious man or a true Chriſtian, that wants the two main qualifications that go to the making up a Diſciple of Chriſt, that is to ſay, *Faith* and *Repentance*? yet this doth he that is *rich in this world, but is not rich in good works.* Good works are the very ſoul of Faith, and it is no more alive without them than the *Body* is without the *Spirit*, as S. *James* has expreſly told us. If we mean that our *Faith* ſhould avail us any thing, it muſt *work* (or be made perfect) *by Charity*, ſaith S. *Paul*, for though a man *have all faith ſo that he could remove mountains*, i. e. though he be ſo heartily perſwaded of the truth of Chriſts Religion as in James 2. 26. Gal. 5. 6.

the ſtrength of his belief to be able to work miracles, as was uſual in the firſt times of Chriſtianity, 1 Cor. 13. 2. *yet if he have not charity his Faith is nothing.* If it be ſaid that the charity that S. *Paul* makes ſo neceſſary to effectual Faith, is not giving alms but quite another thing, for according to him a *man may give all* ver. 3. *his goods to feed the poor*, and yet want the Charity that he ſpeaks of: I anſwer, it is true a man may give alms, and very largely, and yet want that Charity that S. *Paul* here ſo much recommends; but then on the other ſide, none can have that Charity that he ſpeaks of, but they will certainly expreſs it in alms and bounty as they have ability and opportunity: ſo that for all this ſuggeſtion Alms and bounty are abſolutely neceſſary to the efficacy of Faith if there be opportunity of doing them: The plain account of this matter is this, S. *Paul* ſpeaks of Charity with reſpect to its inward principle in the heart, which conſiſts in an univerſal kindneſs and good will to the whole Creation of God; and we ſpeak of it with reſpect to the outward fruits of it in the life and converſation, which are all ſorts of good works, eſpecially works of mercy and bounty: but both theſe come to the ſame thing as to our purpoſe, for the one always follows the other; wherever there is charity in the heart it muſt of neceſſity ſhew it ſelf in theſe kind of actions as there is occaſion, otherwiſe the

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charity is not true but only pretended, for as S. *John* hath told us, *He that loveth* (ὁ ἀγαπῶν) *in truth, must love* ἐν ἔργῳ *in work and in deed.*

And then as for *Repentance*; Charity and Alms-giving is a neceſſary ingredient into that alſo. When S. *John* Baptiſt came preaching Repentance unto *Iſrael*, the people asked him ſaying *what ſhall we do?* meaning in what manner they ſhould expreſs their Repentance: his anſwer was this, *He that hath two coats let him impart to him that hath none, and he that hath meat let him do ſo likewiſe*; and ſuitable to this was the Prophets advice to the King of *Babylon*, when he exhorteth him to Repentance, *break off thy ſins* (ſaith he) *by righteouſneſs, and thy iniquity by ſhewing mercy to the poor*, that is, evidence thy Repentance by thy Alms-giving and Charity. Luke 3.10, 11. Dan. 4.27.

Furthermore, can he be either a good man or a good Chriſtian, that lives in the habitual neglect of that, which of all other virtues God in Scripture ſeems to ſet the greateſt value upon; and contrariwiſe practiſeth that which God hath moſt particularly declared his hatred and averſion to? yet thus doth he that is not charitable with what he hath. So highly acceptable to God are works of mercy and charity, that they are declared to be *the ſacrifices with which he is well pleaſed*, Heb. 13.8. *the things in which he doth delight*, Jerem. 9.24. and *bleſſed* and *happy* are they pronounced that do them, Prov. 22.9.

cap. 14. 21. for hereby men become *the children of God*, *Luke* 6. 35. and entitled to his more especial care and protection, *Psal.* 41. 1, *&c.* nay so dear do they render a man to his Maker, that the wise son of *Sirach* scrupled not to recommend the practice of them in these terms, *Be thou* (saith he) *a Father to the fatherless and instead of a husband unto their mother, so shalt thou be as the Son of the most high, and he shall love thee more than thy own mother doth.*

Ecclus. 4. 10.

On the other side, if we will believe the Scripture, there is nothing more odious to God than the contrary qualities and practices. *The love of money*, which is the foundation of all uncharitableness, is in Scripture called *the root of all evil*; as certainly the greatest evils and mischiefs in the world do often take their beginning from thence. Those that are *covetous* are styled by the name of *Idolaters*, than which no more hateful appellation can be given to a man in the Sacred language. It is said of the *covetous* that *God abhorreth them*; which implies the utmost aversion that the Divine nature is capable of, to any sort of men or things. The uncharitable and hard-hearted men God hath declared he will have no mercy on; *but they shall have judgment without mercy that have shewed no mercy.*

1 *Tim.* 6. 10.

Eph. 5. 5.

Psal. 10. 3.

Jam. 2. 13.

Fourthly and lastly, a necessity there is, that *those that are rich in this world, should do good and be rich in good works, &c.* upon their own account. Though there

there were no other tye upon them, yet self-love and self-preservation would oblige them to it. I meddle not here, how far in point of worldly interest they are concerned to be charitable; though even the motives drawn from hence are very considerable. For certainly, charity is a means not only to preserve and secure to them what they have, and to make them enjoy it more comfortably, but also to increase their store. No man is ever poorer for what he gives away in useful charity, but on the contrary he thrives better for it. God seldom fails, in this world amply to repay what is thus lent to him, besides the other blessings that accompany his store, and go along with it to his children after him. This I am sure is solemnly promised, and in the ordinary dispensations of Providence we see it generally made good: whereas to the greedy and penurious man, all things fall out quite contrary; he may have wealth, but he hath little comfort in it; for a curse generally attends it, of which he feels the sad effects in a variously miserable and vexatious life, and often in either having none, or an unfortunate posterity.

But this is not the thing that I mean to insist on. This world lasts but for a while, and it is no great matter how we fare in it; but we have souls that must live for ever. If therefore men have any kindness for them, if they mean not to be undone

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to all eternity, it is absolutely necessary they should do good with what they have. O that uncharitable Rich men would think upon that woe that our Saviour pronounceth against them: *Woe unto you that are rich, for ye have received your consolation:* O that they would seriously consider and often remember those words of *Abraham* to the Rich man in *Hell*, *Son* (saith he) *remember that thou in thy life receivedst thy good things, and* Lazarus *evil things; but now he is comforted and thou art tormented.* Not that it is a crime to be rich, or to have good things in our life; no, it is the inordinate love of their wealth (to which those that have it are too frequently prone) and their not imploying it to those purposes of doing good for which it was given; it is these things that bring these curses upon them, and really *make it easier,* without an Hyperbole, *for a Camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, Luke* 18. 25. Certain it is there is no one sin that can be named, doth more fatally exclude from Salvation than this we are speaking of. We never find the Prophets, or the Apostles giving a list of those black crimes that will involve all that are guilty of them in inevitable destruction, but we are sure to meet with covetousness, and all the attendants of it among them; as many instances might be given. Nay so great is this sin of uncharitableness, and not doing

Luke 6.24.

Luke 16. 25.

good

good with our wealth, that God in the final sentence that he shall pass upon wicked men, to their condemnation at the last day, seems to take no notice of the other sins and crimes of their life, but only to censure them for this. Thus we find that when the King, having gathered all nations before him, comes to pronounce the sentence upon those on his left hand, who are those that are doomed to everlasting fire; there is no mention made of their criminal actions; they are not condemned for fraud and oppression, for unbelief and irreligion, for lewdness and debauchery, though any of these be enough to damn a man: but meerly for their not doing good, for their not relieving the necessitous, and exercising other acts of Charity when it was in their power. *Matth.* 25. 31, &c.

Since now from these Considerations it doth appear how necessary, how indispensable a duty it is to *do good* with what we have, to be *rich in good works, to be ready to distribute, and willing to communicate*; let me at this time charge all of you that are *rich in this world*, as you would not be unthankful to your great Benefactor, nor unjust to your neighbours; as you have any piety towards God, or any care of your own souls, that you put it in practice. And two instances of this great duty the present occasion, and the exigence of things doth ob-

oblige me more particularly to recommend to you.

The first is the business of the Hospitals; the encouraging and promoting that Charity which the piety of our Ancestors begun, and whose examples their Successors have hitherto worthily followed, and of which we see excellent effects at this day; for this we need no better proof than the Report given in of the great number of poor Children, and other poor people maintained in the several Hospitals, under the pious care of the Lord Mayor, Commonalty, and Citizens of *London* the year last past.

For these so great instances of Charity what have we to do, but with all Gratitude to commemorate those noble and publick spirits that first began them; and with all devotion to put up our prayers to God for all those now alive that have been promoters and encouragers of such good works; and lastly, with all chearfulness and diligence to follow these Patterns by liberally contributing to their Maintenance and advancement. These are the Publick Banks and Treasuries in which we may safely lodge that money which we lend out to God, and may from him expect the Interest. O what comfort will it be to us when we come to dye, to be able to say to our selves, That portion

portion of goods that God hath in his Providence diſpenſed to me, I have neither kept unprofitably in a Napkin, nor ſquander'd it away upon my luſts, but part of it I have put out towards the reſtoring my miſerable Brethren to the right uſe of their reaſon and underſtanding; part of it to the amending mens manners, and from idle and diſſolute perſons, redeeming them to virtue and ſobriety, and making them ſomeway profitable to the Publick; part of it for the healing the ſick, and curing the wounded, and relieving the miſerable and neceſſitous; and laſtly, another part of it towards the Educating poor helpleſs Children in uſeful arts for their bodies, and in the Principles of True Religion for their Souls, that ſo both in their Bodies and Spirits they may be in a capacity to Glorifie God, and to ſerve their Countrey. Theſe are all great things, and in which way ſoever of them we lay out our ſelves, we ſerve excellent ends of Charity.

But there is another point of uſeful publick Charity, which though the occaſion of this meeting hath nothing to do with it, yet the preſent neceſſity of the thing doth oblige me ſeriouſly to recommend to you. There are few I believe in this City either ignorant, or inſenſible of the extreme numerouſneſs of Beggars in our Streets, and unleſs care be taken, their number is likely to increaſe,

for this ſeems to be a growing evil. I dare not lay the fault of this upon the defectiveneſs of our Laws, nor dare I ſay, that the proviſions made for the poor, are incompetent or diſproportionable to the number of them; for perhaps the uſual publick Taxes, and private Free-will offerings diſcretely managed, would go a great way towards the curing this evil; ſuppoſing the richer Pariſhes to contribute to the maintaining the poorer. But here is the miſery, we do not ſufficiently diſtinguiſh between our poor; nor take care to make proviſion for them, according to their reſpective neceſſities. There are ſome that by reaſon either of old age, or evil accidents, are perfectly unable to earn a livelihood for themſelves; or to be any way uſeful to the publick, except by their Prayers and their good examples; and to ſee ſuch go a begging is a ſhame to our Chriſtianity, and a reproach to our Government. There are others that are fit to labour, and might prove uſeful members of the Commonwealth many ways, if they were rightly managed: now the True Charity to theſe is not to relieve them, to the encouragement of their idleneſs; but to employ them, to put them into ſuch a way that they may both maintain themſelves and help towards the maintaining of others; and if they refuſe this, let them ſuffer for their folly; for there is no reaſon *that theſe ſhould eat that will not work*

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if they be *able*. A neceſſity therefore there is if ever this ſcandalous publick nuſance of common begging be redreſſed, that theſe four things be taken care of. 1. That thoſe that cannot work be maintained without begging. 2. That thoſe that can work and are willing, have ſuch publick proviſions made that they may be employed in one way or other, according as they are capable, and every one receive fruits of his labour proportionable to his induſtry. 3. That thoſe that can work and will not, be proſecuted according to the Laws, as Rogues and Vagrants and peſts of the Kingdom. And laſtly, after ſuch publick proviſions are made for the maintaining both ſorts of Poor that are objects of Charity; that is, the helpleſs, and thoſe that endeavour to help themſelves; that all perſons be exhorted and directed to put their private Charity in the right Channel, wholly withdrawing it from the lazy and the luſty Beggars, leſt they be thereby encouraged in their infamous courſe of life, and giving it to thoſe who by publick order ſhall be recommended to them.

Theſe things I hope I may without offence recommend to the Wiſdom and Care of the Government of this Honourable City, ſince there are both *Heads* enough to contrive the particular ways of curing theſe evils, and *Hands* enough that will be open to contribute what is needful to ſo uſeful a

work. Certain it is the thing is practicable, ſince it hath been, and is practiſed in ſome Towns of this Nation, and in ſeveral beyond the Seas. And that it is needful, there is none that hath any true ſenſe of Charity (which conſiſts as much in taking care to prevent the miſeries and neceſſities of mankind, as in relieving them ;) there is none that hath any regard to the Reputation of our Religion, or the Honour and good Government of this City or Kingdom, but muſt needs acknowledge.

It is one of the great Glories of this City, that as they have been always faithful and prudent in the management of thoſe Publick Charities that they have been entruſted with, ſo have they been very ready to encreaſe and to add to them. And God without doubt hath bleſſed them the more for this very thing ; as indeed the beſt atonement that any people can make for the many ſins that the place is guilty of, is the Sacrifice of Alms and Charity. And I hope that which condemned *Sodom* ; to wit, that *there were not ten righteous men found in it* (that is, men that were of a Publick ſpirit, that were truly Liberal, and Bountiful, and Charitable, for that is an uſual Notion of *Righteouſneſs* in the Old Teſtament, and there are ſome paſſages in this Hiſtory which make it probable that it may be the notion of it here) I ſay that very thing it is to be hoped, hath, and will preſerve this City of ours; be-

becauſe, as far as we can gather, there are in it many times ten ſuch Righteous perſons. In truth if there were not ſeveral good men among us, that by the exemplarity of their lives, and their Charity, do ſtand in the gap between the reigning ſins of the times, and the Judgments of God that threaten us for them; it would be a melancholy thing to think what would become of us. But ſo long as God is pleaſed to continue to us a ſucceſſion of thoſe that fear God, and hate covetouſneſs; that make it their buſineſs to do good and to ſerve their generation, there is hopes that he will yet continue to bleſs us. And ſo gracious hath God been to our City and Kingdom in this reſpect, that (to the glory of his name be it ſpoken) whatever boaſts they of the Church of *Rome* are wont to make of the Charitableneſs of their Religion, in oppoſition to the penuriouſneſs of ours; and reproach us with the bounty and munificence of our Popiſh Anceſtors, and the barrenneſs of their Proteſtant Succeſſors: yet we may ſafely affirm that there have been more publick works of Charity done in this City and Kingdom ſince the Reformation, than can be proved to have been done in the ſame compaſs of years during all the time that Popery prevailed among us.

O therefore let us go on to do this Honour to our Religion, let us go on by our good works to adorn.

adorn the doctrine of God that we profeſs. Let us not only equal but labour to exceed the Piety and the Publick ſpiritedneſs of our Forefathers. Let every one both Magiſtrates and People in their ſeveral capacities, be zealous and vigorous both in conſulting, in contriving, and in acting for the publick good as much as is poſſible.

And for your greater incouragement thus to do, let it be remembred, in the laſt place, that beſides the outward advantages both publick and private that we reap by being charitable; this is the beſt courſe we can take to ſecure our everlaſting Happineſs in the world to come. For *to do good* with our wealth, *to be rich in good works, to be ready to diſtribute, willing to communicate, is* (as the Apoſtle in the Text tells us) *the way to lay up to our ſelves in ſtore a good Foundation againſt the time to come, that we may lay hold on eternal life.* And this is the Third thing I am to inſiſt on from the Text.

I mean not here to trouble you with the Criticiſms about the word θεμέλιον in the Text, by diſputing whether it ſhould be render'd *Foundation* as it is in our Tranſlation; though to lay up a foundation ſeems an unuſual way of ſpeaking; we do not lay up Foundations but build upon them: or whether the word ſhould be taken to ſignifie the *Bond* or the *Evidence* that God hath given us for the per-

performance of his part of the Covenant; as it is used by this Apostle elsewhere, where he tells us that the *Foundation of God standeth sure having this seal,* that is to say, that Covenant or Indenture, that God hath made with mankind, standeth sure, and hath this seal put to it; for men do not put seals to foundations but to Covenants: Or lastly, whether the word should be rendred a *Treasure*, so as to read the Text thus, *laying up to themselves a good Treasure against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life*] The original word (say the Learned) is capable of being Translated all these ways, and the last seems as natural as any; for to lay up Treasure to our selves against the time to come, is a proper way of speaking, and that which our Saviour frequently useth in that very thing we are here treating of. But it matters not much which of them we pitch upon, for they all come to one sence; and that is this, That to be very charitable in this world is a good means to secure to our selves a title to eternal happiness in the next.

2 Tim. 2. 19.

Vid. Dr. Hammond. *in loc.*

But to prevent all misunderstanding, that may happen of this point, I desire before I speak directly to it, to premise these two things.

First, Though we do maintain with the Ancient Church, the efficacy of Charity and good works for the furthering a mans Salvation, yet we utterly reject those doctrines which the Modern

Roma-

adorn the doctrine of God that we profeſs. Let us not only equal but labour to exceed the Piety and the Publick-ſpiritedneſs of our Forefathers. Let every one both Magiſtrates and People in their ſeveral capacities, be zealous and vigorous both in conſulting, in contriving, and in acting for the publick good as much as is poſſible.

And for your greater incouragement thus to do, let it be remembred, in the laſt place, that beſides the outward advantages both publick and private that we reap by being charitable; this is the beſt courſe we can take to ſecure our everlaſting Happineſs in the world to come. For *to do good* with our wealth, *to be rich in good works, to be ready to diſtribute, willing to communicate, is* (as the Apoſtle in the Text tells us) *the way to lay up to our ſelves in ſtore a good Foundation againſt the time to come, that we may lay hold on eternal life.* And this is the Third thing I am to inſiſt on from the Text.

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performance of his part of the Covenant; as it is used by this Apostle elsewhere, where he tells us that the *Foundation of God standeth sure having this seal,* that is to say, that Covenant or Indenture, that God hath made with mankind, standeth sure, and hath this seal put to it; for men do not put seals to foundations but to Covenants: Or lastly, whether the word should be rendred a *Treasure*, so as to read the Text thus, *laying up to themselves a good Treasure against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life*] The original word (say the Learned) is capable of being Translated all these ways, and the last seems as natural as any; for to lay up Treasure to our selves against the time to come, is a proper way of speaking, and that which our Saviour frequently useth in that very thing we are here treating of. But it matters not much which of them we pitch upon, for they all come to one sence; and that is this, That to be very charitable in this world is a good means to secure to our selves a title to eternal happiness in the next.

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But to prevent all misunderstanding, that may happen of this point, I desire before I speak directly to it, to premise these two things.

First, Though we do maintain with the Ancient Church, the efficacy of Charity and good works for the furthering a mans Salvation, yet we utterly reject those doctrines which the Modern Roma-

Romaniſts have advanced in this matter. The Popiſh doctrines about good works are theſe three following, That good works are meritorious; do deſerve the Favour and the Rewards of God Almighty. Again, that the ſurpluſage of a mans good works, that is to ſay, the merits of ſo many of his good deeds, as are over and above what is ſufficient to ſave his own ſoul, may by the Church be diſpenſed out to the benefit of others, they being part of the Churches treaſure; and upon this foundation they ground their Indulgences. And laſtly, that good works, *i. e.* the Alms of dying perſons, that are given to the Church or Clergy, will by the means of the *Maſſes* and *Diriges* that they purchaſe to be ſaid for them, be effectual for the freeing their ſouls out of the Torments of *Purgatory*. Theſe are the Popiſh doctrines concerning good works, which we all juſtly reject, as having no foundation in Scripture, or good Antiquity; and being apparently contrived for the promoting their ſecular gain and advantage. But then as for the neceſſity, or the conduciveneſs of good works to a mans Salvation, which is all we here plead for, I know no good Proteſtant but doth as earneſtly contend for it as any of that Communion.

Secondly, Whatever efficacy we attribute to works of Charity as a means for the obtaining eternal life; we would not be underſtood hereby to ex-

exclude the neceſſary concurrence of other virtues and graces to that end. It doth not from hence follow, that it is an indifferent matter, what Religion a man is of, or what kind of life he leads, if he be but mighty bountiful to the poor, and do a great deal of good in his life. No, how acceptable to God ſoever the Sacrifice of Alms and Charity be, yet we are not to expect, it ſhall be available to our Salvation, unleſs it proceed from a pure heart, and be offered with a lively Faith in Jeſus Chriſt, and accompanied with a ſincere endeavour to obey all Gods Commandments. Eternal Happineſs is not propoſed in the Goſpel, as a reward of any one ſingle virtue, no not of the greateſt, but of all of them together; if indeed there can be any true virtue where there is not a conjunction of all; I ſay if there can be, for S. *James* ſeems to affirm that there cannot. *Whoſoever* (ſaith he) *ſhall keep the whole Law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.* *Jam.* 2. 10.

But now having ſaid this by way of caution to prevent all occaſion that any may take from our ſo earneſtly preſſing Charity, to undervalue and neglect other duties: It cannot be denyed on the other ſide, that very great effects are by our Saviour and his Apoſtles, aſcribed to this virtue with reſpect to mens Salvation in the other world.

Luk. 6.30, 35. In the 6th of S. *Luke*, our Lord thus adviseth, *Love* (saith he) *your enemies, give to him that asketh, do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again, so shall your reward be great, and ye shall be the children of the most highest.* Now sure to be entitled to *great rewards*, and to be the *children of the most high* doth look farther than this present world. Our Saviour without doubt means the same thing here, that he expresses upon the same occasion in another place, *viz.* *They* (those that you do good to) *cannot recompence you, but you shall be recompenced at the Resurrection of the just.*

Luke 14. 14.

Luke 16. Again the Parable of the *unjust Steward*, that provided so well for himself, against a bad time, out of his Masters goods; is wholly designed to this purpose; and that the Application of it sufficiently shews, for our Saviour having said that the Lord of this Steward commended him for his providence and care of himself, he thus applies it to all his Disciples. *Wherefore I say unto you, make you friends to your selves of the Mammon of unrighteousness* (i. e. of these false deceitful riches) *that when you fail you may be received into everlasting habitations*, plainly declaring, that the best provision that rich men can make for themselves, against the time of their death, in order to their reception into the other world, must be the charitable actions they do with their wealth while they live here.

ver. 9.

Lastly,

Laſtly, In another place our Saviour ſaith the very ſame thing in effect, that is ſaid in the Text; for this is his counſel to all that mean to be happy in the next life, *viz.* that they *ſell that they have* (that is when the times are ſuch that it is reaſonable ſo to do) that *they give alms; for thereby they provide to themſelves bags which wax not old, a Treaſure in the Heavens where no thief approacheth nor moth corrupteth.* Luk 12.33

To theſe three Texts of our Saviour, I ſhall add three others of three of his Apoſtles which ſpeak juſt to the ſame effect, and with them I ſhall conclude. The firſt is that of S. *Paul* in his Epiſtle to the *Hebrews*; where having ſpoken moſt ſevere things, and denounced no leſs than Hell fire againſt the falſe brethren among them, yet thus he comforts the Church to whom he writes. *But beloved* (ſaith he) *we are perſwaded better things of you, and things that do accompany ſalvation, though we thus ſpeak.* Heb. 6.9. And what I pray is the reaſon he is thus perſwaded? Verily this, *For God* (ſaith he) *is not unrighteous,* ver. 10. *to forget your work and labor of love, which you have ſhewed to his name, in that ye have miniſtred to the Saints, and yet do miniſter.* It was purely their Charity to the brethren, that made him have theſe good hopes of them, that they were in a ſtate of Salvation. Though that Church as to other things was in a very degenerate condition, yet conſidering they had been laborious and diligent in the exerciſe

of Charity, and ſtill continued ſo to be; *God would not forget them*, nay he was not ſo *unrighteous as to forget them*. And then, that which follows in the next verſe, is very obſervable; *And we deſire that every* ver. 11. *one of you do ſhew the ſame diligence* (to wit, in the practice of charity) *to the full aſſurance of hope unto the end*. If they would have their hopes of a future life aſſured to them, the way to do it was to perſevere in their diligent attendance to works of mercy and kindneſs and charity.

The ſecond paſſage is that of S. *John*. *Hereby* 1 *John* 3. (ſaith he) *perceive we the love of God towards us, be-* 16, &c. *cauſe he laid down his life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoſo hath this worlds good, and ſeeth his brother hath need, and ſhutteth up his bowels of compaſſion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? My little children, let us not love in word neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth; and hereby we know that we are of the truth, and ſhall aſſure our hearts before him*, I pray mind that. By our charitable diſpoſition and doing good to our brethren, by this we know we are true diſciples of Jeſus Chriſt, and this is that, that *will aſſure our hearts*, will give us confidence to appear before God at the laſt day when he comes to judge the world. And this is a point that the Apoſtle thinks ſo conſiderable, that he goes over with it again in the next verſe, *Beloved if our hearts condemn us not* (*i. e.* condemn us not as

to

to this point of love and charity) *then have we confidence towards God; and whatsoever we ask, we shall receive of him, because we do those things that are pleasing in his sight.*

The last Text to this purpose that I desire may be taken notice of, is that of S. *Peter*, *Above all things my brethren have fervent charity among your selves, for charity shall cover the multitude of sins.* O how comfortable are these words! there is none of us, even the best, but hath a multitude of sins to answer for; by what means now must we obtain, that these sins shall be *covered*? that is, shall be forgiven; for covering of sins is the forgiveness of them in the Scripture-language. Why, the Apostle hath directed us to the method, *above all things put on charity, for it is charity that shall cover the multitude of sins.* Charity is of that power with God, that it alone, is able to overcome the malignity of many of our sins and frailties, that would otherwise do us mischief. If any thing can make atonement for the carelessness and the many failings of our lives; and prevent the punishment that is due to them; it is to be very charitable, and to do much good: *Charity covers a multitude of sins in this life.* A great many temporal judgments, that would otherwise have fallen upon us for our sins are hereby prevented, and that not only private ones but publick too: And I think it no Popery to affirm that *Charity will cover a multitude of sins in the other life also.* That is, whoever is of a truly *charitable* disposition, and doth a great deal of good in his gene-

1 Pet. 4. 8.

Pf. 32. 1.

ration,

ration, though he may have a great many infirmities and miscarriages to answer for; yet if he be sincerely virtuous in the main, and so capable of the rewards of the other world; his other failings will be overlooked, they will be buried in his good deeds, and the man shall be rewarded notwithstanding. Or if he be a *vitious* person, and so must of necessity fall short of the glory that shall be revealed; yet still in proportion, the good he hath done in his life *will cover the multitude of sins.* Though it will not be available for the making him happy, because he is not capable of being so; yet it will be for the lessening his punishment. He shall be in a much more supportable condition among the miserable, than those that have been unmerciful, or cruel or uncharitable in their lives. O therefore what remains, but that considering all these things, we should *be stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in these works of the Lord, for as much as we know that our labour shall not be in vain in the Lord. Giving all diligence to add to Faith, Virtue; and to virtue, Knowledge; and to knowledge, Temperance; and to temperance, Patience; and to patience, Godliness; and to godliness Brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness, Charity. By our good works making our calling and election sure,* (so some Copies have the 10*th ver.* of 1 *Pet.* 1.) *that doing these things we may never fall; but an entrance may be ministred to us abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

1 *Cor.* 15. 58.

2 *Pet.* 1. 5, &c.

ver. 10.

THE END.

Clayton Mayor.

Jovis xxx. die *Septembris* 1680. Annóque Regni Regis *Caroli* Secundi *Angliæ*, &c. tricesimo secundo.

THis *Court doth desire Dr.* Sharpe *to Print his Sermon preached yesterday at* Bow-Church, *before the Election of the Lord Mayor.*

Wagstaffe.

A SERMON

PREACHED

Before the Right Honourable

The Lord Mayor

AND

ALDERMEN,

In *Bow-Church*; on the feast of St. *Michael*, 1680.

At the Election of

The LORD MAYOR

for the Year ensuing.

By *JOHN SHARPE*, D. D. Rector of St. *Giles* in the Fields, and Chaplain to the Right Honourable the Lord High Chancellour of *England*.

LONDON,
Printed by *M. F.* for *Walter Kettilby*, at the *Bishop's-Head* in Saint *Paul's* Church-Yard. 1680.

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PSAL. CXij. 4.

To the Upright there ariſeth Light in the Darkneſs: ------

GOdlineſs, ſaith S. *Paul, hath the promiſe of this life, as well as of that which is to come.* Of this Propoſition of his, the Pſalm we have now before us, may ſeem to be an Explication or Paraphraſe. 1 Tim. 4. 8.

For in this Pſalm Two things are deſigned, A deſcription of the *Pious* Man; and a deſcription of his *Bleſſedneſs* in this Life: each of which is done in five inſtances or particulars.

The terms wherein the *Pious* man is here deſcrib'd, are theſe following.

Firſt, He is one that *Feareth God and greatly delighteth in his Commandments*, v. 1.

Secondly, He is one that is *Righteous* and *Upright* in his Converſation, v. 4. & 6.

Thirdly, He is one that is Prudent and Diſcreet in the managing of his Affairs, v. 5. *He guideth his affairs with diſcretion.*

Fourthly, He is one whoſe *Heart is fixed truſting in the Lord*, v. 7.

Laſtly, He is one that is extreamly Charitable. He is *gracious and full of Compaſſion*, v. 4. *He ſheweth favour and lendeth*, v. 5. *He hath diſperſed, he hath given to the poor*, v. 9.

Now the *Bleſſedneſs* of ſuch a man as this, as to this Life, is deſcrib'd in the five inſtances following.

The firſt of which is, A great and Happy poſterity, thus, v. 2. *His ſeed ſhall be mighty upon earth, the generation of the Upright ſhall be bleſſed.*

The ſecond is, A Plentifull and an Ample Fortune, thus in the 3d. v. *Riches and Plenteouſneſs ſhall be in his houſe.*

The third is, A laſting Fame and Reputation, thus again in the 3d. v. *his Righteouſneſs remaineth for ever*, and likewiſe in the 6th. v. *He ſhall be had in everlaſting remembrance.*

The fourth is, Honour and Power and Dignity, even ſuch as ſhall excite the Envy of the Wicked, thus in the 9th. v. *His horn ſhall be exalted with honour, the wicked ſhall ſee it and ſhall be grieved*, &c.

The fifth is, Great Safety and Peace in the midſt of Dangerous and Troubleſome times, thus in the Text, *To the Upright there ariſeth Light in the Darkneſs.* i. e. *Light* in the greateſt Straits and Difficulties; for that is the meaning

ning of *Darkneſs* in this place. Times of *Darkneſs* in the Scripture Language are Evil and Difficult and Dangerous times. Now upon account of this *Light* that ariſeth to the *Upright man* in Evil times, it comes to paſs as it followeth, v. 6, 7, 8. that ſuch a one *ſhall not be moved for ever, neither ſhall he be afraid of evil tidings, for his heart is eſtabliſhed, and he ſhall not ſhrink untill he ſee his deſire upon his Enemies.* Or as the Chaldee perhaps better renders it, *untill he ſee redemption in diſtreſs.*

This is the juſt Analyſis of the whole Pſalm. Now of theſe ſeveral Characters whereby the Pious man is deſcrib'd, I have pitch'd upon that of his *Uprightneſs* to give an account of and to recommend to you at this time. And of the ſeveral Inſtances of the *Bleſſedneſs* of ſuch a man I have pitch't upon that of *Safety and Peace* in the midſt of Perillous and Troubleſome times. Theſe two points I have choſen to entertain you upon, as judging them moſt ſuitable to the preſent occaſion, and to our preſent circumſtances. And we find them both join'd together in the words of the Text, *To the Upright there ariſeth Light in the Darkneſs.*

Here then we have Two things to conſider, Firſt, The *Perſon* to whom the *Promiſe* here

made, or the *Bleſſedneſs* here mentioned doth belong, It is the *Upright man.* Secondly, The *Promiſe*, or the *Bleſſedneſs* it ſelf, It is *Light in times of Darkneſs.*

I begin with the Character of the Perſon to whom this Promiſe is made, He is the *Upright man*, or as in our more common Language we expreſs him, the *Honeſt* man, the man of *Integrity.* We all know ſo well what is meant by theſe words, that it would render the thing more difficult to offer Critically to give Light to them. As all thoſe General Terms, whereby a mans whole Duty is expreſt in Scripture, have their ſeveral reſpects and conſiderations which difference them one from the other, though they be all equally Comprehenſive: So hath this term of *Uprightneſs.* That which it immediately and particularly reſpects, is the Goodneſs of a mans Principles, and the ſutableneſs of his Actions to them. Or thus, The Conformity of a mans mind to the Eternal Rules of Righteouſneſs, and the Conformity of his Actions to the Principles of his mind. This is that upon account of which any perſon is denominated Upright, and contrary to this is all Hypocritical and Partial dealings in matters of our Duty. So that if we would give the definition of an *Upright* man, it ſhould

be in such terms as these, He is a man that in all things follows the Dictates of his Conscience. Or, he is One, that makes his Duty the Rule of his Actions. Or, he is One, that always proposeth to himself Righteous ends, and pursues those Ends in Righteous ways.

This is the generall description of the *Upright* man: But for the more lively display of him; and the rendring him, as more Amiable, so more Imitable, it will be fit that we represent him a little more particularly under those several Respects and Capacities in which his Uprightness is principally seen and expreſt.

And here we must consider him with respect to *God*, and with respect to *Men*. Under the former Consideration we are to view his *Religion*. Under the latter his *Civil Conversation*.

And none ought to be surpriz'd that in the Character of an *Upright* man we take notice of his Religious Carriage towards God. For in truth that is a point which is Essentially necessary to Uprightness. He (saith *Solomon*) *that walketh in Uprightness feareth the Lord.* Indeed take away Religion and the Fear of God, and the Foundation of *Uprightness* is destroy'd. For all the Principles of Conscience, and all the Obligation to live up to those Principles, Prov. 14.

is thereby taken away. He that hath no ſenſe of God and Religion, can never think himſelf bound to obſerve any Rules in his Actions and behaviour, but what are ſubſervient to the carrying on his private ſenſual worldly Intereſt: And conſequently whatever is Inconſiſtent with that, be it never ſo baſe and vile and injurious, he cannot take himſelf in point of Duty, oblig'd to ſtick at it, when he hath the leaſt temptation to it. The reſult of which is, That he may commit all the villanies in the world, and yet think himſelf as Innocent, and his Actions as Commendable, as if he had been never ſo Honeſt and Virtuous.

He therefore that is an *Upright* man, hath a ſerious and hearty ſenſe of God and Religion upon his Spirit, and is above all things carefull to preſerve and increaſe that ſenſe. But then his conduct in this affair is much different from that of ordinary pretenders to Religion.

For he is a man that doth not content himſelf with a meer ſpeculative belief, or an outward Profeſſion of the Truths of Religion; but doth ſo far impreſs them on his heart, that they influence his whole Life and Converſation. He doth not think it ſufficient to be Orthodox in his Opinions; or to be a

Mem-

Member of a True Church; or to be zealous in maintaining and promoting the Right way: But he takes care to live as he believes; to practiſe ſutably to the profeſſion he makes. As he holds faſt the *Form* of *Godlineſs*; ſo he never fails to expreſs the *power* of it, in an Innocent and a Virtuous Life.

He is a man, that in the whole Conduct of his Religious affairs, minds Conſcience more than any ſelfiſh conſideration. He takes not up his Principles either out of Humour, or Paſſion; To advance his Intereſt, or to pleaſe a Party: But he believes a thing becauſe it is True, and Profeſſeth it becauſe it is his Duty. In matters of Religion he hath the indifference of a Traveller, whoſe great concernment is to arrive at his Journeys end; but for the way that leads thither, be it high, or low, all is one to him, ſo long as he is but certain that it is the Right way.

And as he doth not chuſe his Religion out of worldly conſiderations: ſo neither doth he quit it upon ſuch. But is reſolute and conſtant in bearing witneſs to the Truth againſt all oppoſition whatſoever. As he doth not make ſhow of his Religion the more when it is in faſhion, and when it may prove advantagious to him: ſo neither doth he practiſe it the

leſs,

leſs, when it may prove Ignominious or Dangerous. He is obſtinately Tenacious of his Principles when he knows them to be good, and prepared to endure the utmoſt extremities rather than violate the Laws and Dictates of his Conſcience.

He is a man that thinks Religion too Sacred a thing to be proſtituted to mean purpoſes; and therefore he never uſeth it as an Inſtrument for the ſerving a turn; never makes it a Cloak for the covering a private end, though he were ſure he could compaſs his deſigns by it. He knows that the greateſt Impoſtures have laid hid under this mask, and by ſuch Artifices God hath been often made a Patron of the moſt horrid villanies.

He is a man, that doth not place his Religion in outward forms and ſervices; or in little cheap duties that coſt him nothing. He hath a nobler ſenſe of God than to think that ſuch things can alone recommend us to him: And therefore his principal concernment is about the great Indiſpenſable Duties of Chriſtianity. Matt. 23. 23. *The weightier matters of the Law, Juſtice and Mercy and Faith.* He hath the everlaſting Notions and differences of Good and Evil, deeply ingraven in his heart, and in the practiſing or the avoiding them, he chiefly lays out himſelf.

He

He is a man, that doth not pick and chuſe out of Gods Commandments, which to obſerve to the neglect of the reſt: but endeavours Uprightly and Sincerely to obſerve them all. He calls no ſin little, becauſe his temper inclines him to it, or the courſe of his Life leads him more frequently into the Temptations of it. But he hath an hearty Uniform Averſion to every thing that is Evil. He holds no ſecret friendſhip or correſpondence with any Enemy of God; but fights as reſolutely, againſt his moſt agreeable and moſt gainfull ſins, as thoſe that he hath leſs Temptation to upon thoſe accounts.

He is a hearty enemy to all Factions in Religion, as knowing the life and ſoul of Chriſtianity is often eaten out by them. All dividing Principles he Abhors; and as much as he loves *Truth*, he is not leſs concerned for *Peace*. And he is better pleaſed with one Inſtance of his Charity in Compoſing, or his Zeal in Suppreſſing Religious differences, than with twenty of his Skill and Abilities in diſputing them. For he knows that LOVE is more acceptable to God, than a right Opinion; and *to be a Martyr rather than divide and rend the Church, is not leſs Glorious than to be a Martyr for refuſing to offer Sacrifice to Idols.* *Dionyſ. Alex. in Euſeb.*

Laſtly, He is a man, Religious without noiſe; and uſes no little Arts to make his Piety taken notice of in the World. For he ſeeks not the praiſe of Men in any thing he doth, but ſtudies to approve himſelf to God onely. And therefore he is as carefull of his thoughts, as of his actions; and hath the ſame fear of God, and regard of his duty, when no man ſees him; as when he is in the moſt publick places.

Theſe are the great ſtrokes of *Uprightneſs* as to *Religion*. And whoever makes good theſe Characters, may unqueſtionably conclude of himſelf, that he is an *Honeſt man* to *God-ward*, *A true Iſraelite indeed in whom there is no guile.*

Come we now, in the ſecond place, To take a view of the *Upright man* in his civil converſation: To give ſome account of him with reference to his carriage and demeanour amongſt men. And here again we muſt conſider him under two capacities, as a *Private* perſon, and as a *Magiſtrate*.

And Firſt, As a Private perſon, The general Rule by which he frames and modells his whole converſation, is ſuch a prudent and diligent care of himſelf, and his own good, as is not onely conſiſtent with, but doth effectually tend to promote the Good and Happi-

neſs

neſs of all others that he deals with. This is the fundamental Principle which he lays down to obſerve in all his commerce with Mankind. For he conſiders that every man in the world hath a right to be happy as well as himſelf: And he conſiders, that, as things are ſo contriv'd, that he cannot be Happy without the aſſiſtance of others: So it is infinitely reaſonable that he in like manner ſhould contribute his endeavours to the making them Happy alſo. Theſe now being the main principles of his mind, he takes care in his whole converſation that his Actions and Carriage be ſutable to them, and bear ſome proportion with them.

And therefore, we may be ſure, that he is a man exactly Juſt in all his dealings, and would not knowingly do the leaſt wrong or injury to any, though he could gain never ſo much by it; and were he never ſo ſecure that he could do it without diſcovery.

He is a man, that where he is truſted, is faithfull to the uttermoſt. Never making advantages of mens credulity, nor abuſing the confidence they repoſe in him.

He is one, that in point of fair dealing between man and man, is ſevere even to Scrupuloſity; and he would rather ſit down with

loſs, than ſerve his own ends by any practice that hath but a bad report, that hath but even the appearance or ſuſpicion of evil in it; though in the mean time he knows that what is got by ſuch practices is by ſome men accounted lawfull gain.

He is a man of great Candour, and ſweetneſs, and obligingneſs in his behaviour: But withall, as on one hand, he is carefull not to run himſelf into Inconveniences by his good nature: So on the other hand, the kindneſs and good-will he profeſſeth to all about him, is more than a compliment, or a ſemblance of his countenance. For his fair ſpeeches are always attended with honeſt dealings; And what he once promiſeth, he is punctual in making it good, though it be to his own prejudice.

He is a man that loves a good Name and Reputation, as well as any one, and is extremely tender of it; But yet he ſcorns to make uſe of any evil Arts, either for the procuring, or preſerving it.

And conſequently he is a man, that hates all mean and ſervile compliance; and will neither ſpeak nor doe any thing againſt the ſenſe of his mind for the humouring any. Flattery and diſſimulation he abhors, and he dares

ſpeak

ſpeak his mind, when he judges it fit and reaſonable; even though he knows the doing it will give offence.

And as he is perfectly averſe to all Fawning and Flattery: ſo he is above Envy and Detraction. He never leſſens another man to make himſelf greater; nor looks upon the proſperity of his neighbour with an evil eye; backbiting, and carrying about idle ſtories is not the thing he lives by. He puts a fair conſtruction upon other mens words and actions, and will rather conceal a real fault, than make it worſe in the reporting it. He hopes and thinks the beſt of all men; and rejoyceth in the happineſs of thoſe about him. He doth as much good as he can; and that good that is done by others, he is ſo far from envying, that he thanks God for it as if he had done it himſelf.

He is a man of great Plainneſs and Simplicity; Apert and open, and free in all his carriage. You may always know where to have him, for his words and his thoughts always go together. And though he is carefull not to be laviſh of his ſpeech, nor at all times to diſcover all his mind: yet he is as carefull, that what he doth ſpeak ſhall be agreeable to truth; and he ſo ſpeaks it that thoſe that hear him, may take meaſures of his mind from it.

He is a man, who though he be very watch-

full

full of opportunities to doe himſelf good, and very ſagacious in ſpying dangers, and avoiding them: yet he never uſes any indirect means, either for the benefiting or ſecuring himſelf. He ſcorns to make advantages of any mans neceſſities: Nor will he undermine another, for the effecting of his own deſigns. Deceit and Colluſion are ſtrangers to all his dealings. Above all things he hates a Trick; and in his account to be a man of Intrigues, a cunning or a ſhrewd fellow, is but a more gentile term for a knave.

In a word, The deſigns he propoſeth to himſelf, are all Honeſt and Juſt, and ſuch as tend to the good of the Community as well as his Own, but to no mans loſs or hindrance. And the means he uſeth for accompliſhing theſe deſigns, are all fair and Regular; and ſo free is both his Heart and his Actions from all Impoſture, that he cares not if all the world were privy to them.

This is the man that is *Upright* in his *Converſation* towards *Men*. The Man that with the wiſdom of the Serpent joyns the Innocence and ſimplicity of the Dove.

But thus much of the *Upright* man as a *Private* Perſon; Let us now view him a little under a more conſpicuous character. Let us conſider him as a *Magiſtrate* intruſted with the management of publick affairs. (Which is the Second par-

particular we are to insist on under this head) And here the Upright man is still the same, acted by the same Principles, pursuing still the same designs we have hitherto mentioned. Onely his Vertues have another Sphere and another Object, and therefore require another consideration.

The great thing he proposeth to himself, in taking any Office upon him, is the glory of God, and the publick good. The Honour and Dignity of the place, and the other worldly advantages that may attend it, are but secondary considerations with him. The first is his main design which he steadily and constantly pursues throughout the whole Administration of his Office; The other is never thought on but with subordination to the former.

And therefore acting from such Principles as these, we may easily conclude him to be a man whose Counsels and actions are not steer'd by the wind of popular applause, but by the sense of his duty. He studies not to ingratiate himself with men, but to discharge a good Conscience. He is more carefull to be a *Good* Magistrate than to be a *Loved* one; though (so happily are things contriv'd, that) in being the former, he rarely fails of the latter.

The consequence of which is, That he is a man of great Courage and Boldness, and Reso-

lution,

lution, He dares to do whatſoever is fit, and juſt, and conducive to the publick good, what diſcouragements ſoever he meet with. Neither the menaces of the mighty, nor the murmurings of the multitude, can fright him from his Duty. For he dreads none but God; nor fears to doe any thing but what is misbecoming him.

But then he is a man that doth not reſolve things haſtily, and upon the conſideration of a few particulars, but takes good advice, and uſeth mature deliberation before he determines himſelf. He doth nothing precipitately: But weighs all things, repreſented to him, as impartially as he can. His ears are open to all parties, and he debates what is ſaid, without paſſion or prejudice or prepoſſeſſion; And he always conſiders more what is ſpoken, than who it is that ſpeaks it.

He is a man whom you cannot ſo much diſoblige as by attempting to corrupt him. Neither the regard of his profit, nor his kindneſs to his friends, can in matters of Right, tempt him to act againſt his inward ſenſe. As to theſe things he is as blind as Juſtice herſelf, and you may as ſoon draw the Sun from his line, as him from the ſteady and ſtrict paths of Righteouſneſs.

He is a man that looks upon his Office rather as a burthen, than a preferment. And therefore he is wonderfully ſolicitous about

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the well discharging it. His care and study is chiefly employed upon the publick, and he rather suffers the miscarriage of his own affairs than that the community by his negligence should receive any prejudice. While others are doing their own business, he is watching for the common good; for he always remembers that he is a publick person, and that the time and strength that God affords him are not his, but theirs, by and for whom he is intrusted.

He is a man, that imploys all his power and interest, as much as is possible, for the maintenance of the worship and service of God, and the defence and encouragement of the true Religion. For he considers God, as the first and principall person to be respected in all Governments and Societies, as being not onely the Authour but the Head of them. And he remembers that Religion doth so much influence the Civil State, that the happiness and ruin of Cities and Kingdoms are link'd with the well or ill management of it.

And in pursuance of this his Zeal for God and Religion he takes care, as much as in him lies, to encourage those Persons that are Vertuous and Good, and to suppress and bring out of credit all Vice and Debauchery, all Impiety and Irreligion, all Faction and Disorder; together with the Maintainers and Abettors of them.

He is a Man, that effectually makes good *Job's* Character of himſelf, who was alſo a Magiſtrate: *He puts on Righteouſneſs and it cloaths him, his Judgment is a Robe and a Diadem: He is Eyes to the blind, and Feet he is to the lame: He is a Father to the Poor, and the Cauſe which he knoweth not he ſearcheth out: He breaketh the Jaws of the Wicked, and plucketh the Spoil out of his teeth.*

Job 29. 14, &c.

He is a Man, that looketh upon himſelf to have a Truſt, both with reference to thoſe above him, and thoſe under him: And therefore he is carefull to carry himſelf with an even ſteady hand, with reſpect to both; ſtudiouſly endeavouring, both to preſerve his Allegiance to his Prince, and his Fidelity to the Publick: Neither invading the Rights of the one, nor injuring the Liberties of the other.

He is one, that, next to the Honour of God, ſtudies the Peace and Quiet of the Place where he is concern'd. And therefore, as on one hand he is watchfull in ſpying out Dangers, and quick in applying ſuch Remedies to them as are proper in the Place and Station he holds: So on the other ſide he neither takes nor gives the Alarm upon every ſlight Surmize, or popular Apprehenſion. He makes the beſt of all things that happen; and by his Prudence and Moderation endeavours to extinguiſh growing

Flames,

Flames, rather than add Fewell to them; To calm and allay mens Jealouſies and Animoſities, rather than to excite and increaſe them.

Laſtly, to conclude; He is a Man, that fears God; that honours the King; that is obſervant of the Laws; that is true to the Government; and that meddles not with them that are given to change.

Having thus given you an account of the Upright man, under the ſeveral principal relations in which he ſtands; I come now in the ſecond place, for the comfort of all that are ſuch, and for the encouragement of all others to endeavour to be ſuch; to ſet forth the advantages and priviledges, that ſuch a man enjoys in evil and dangerous times. *To the Upright there ariſeth Light in the Darkneſs.*

Darkneſs, as I told you before, is a word by which the Scripture expreſſeth any kind of ſtraits, or difficulties, or adverſities. Thus *Job* 15. 21. *Darkneſs* is there oppoſed to *Proſperity*; thus *Lam.* 3. 2. *I am the man*, (ſaith the Prophet) *that have ſeen Affliction, by the rod of his wrath he hath led me and brought me into Darkneſs.* And thus likewiſe, to name no more Texts, *Joel* 2. 2. The day of Gods Viſitation upon *Jeruſalem* is called *a Day of Gloominеſs and Darkneſs; a day of Clouds and thick Darkneſs.*

This now being the Notion of *Darkneſs*:

when it is ſaid in the Text, *To the Upright man there ariſeth Light in the Darkneſs*; By *Light* we may underſtand any one of theſe three things, that is to ſay;

By *Light*, we may underſtand *Light* for his *Guidance* and *Direction*; and then the ſenſe is, That in critical and perilous times, the *Upright* man of all others, will be beſt enabled to order and manage his affairs.

Or ſecondly, By *Light* we may underſtand *Safety* and *Defence*, as the word is ſometimes taken in Scripture; and then the ſenſe is, That in Evil times the *Upright* man walks moſt free from danger; He of all others may expect ſecurity and protection in a common Calamity.

Or thirdly, By *Light* we may underſtand *Peace* and *Joy* (as that likewiſe is another uſual ſenſe of the word,) and then the meaning is, That in evil times, let things happen as they will, though it ſhould be the fortune of the Upright man to be oppreſt in the crowd; Yet this happineſs he will always have, that his mind will be at perfect eaſe and peace. Nothing ſhall ever diſcompoſe him, but in the midſt of his ſufferings his heart ſhall be repleniſhed with perpetual Comfort.

In any one of theſe ſenſes the Text may be taken, and in all the Three it fails not to be made good to the *Upright* man.

First,

First, *To the Upright man there ariſeth Light in the Darkneſs*, taking *Light* for *Guidance* and *Direction*. Be the times never ſo dark, he hath this happineſs, that he is rarely at a loſs how to ſteer his courſe. He finds his way eaſily when other men are quite bewildred; and he readily expedites himſelf out of ſuch difficulties as thoſe that act by other principles find themſelves grievouſly intangled with. This is a thing that ſhould mightily recommend the practice of Uprightneſs, eſpecially in evil times; and that it is really attended with this advantage, muſt needs be acknowledged upon theſe two accounts.

First, To an Upright man his way lies plainer and is more eaſily ſeen and diſcovered.

And ſecondly, He hath a greater Light to ſee it by, than thoſe that take other meaſures in the management of their deſigns.

First, The Upright man of all others moſt eaſily ſees his way, for it lies plain and even, and ſtraight before him. Whereas the ways of vice and wickedneſs are extremely crooked, full of windings and turnings.

Whoever purſues evil deſigns, and is a ſlave to baſe affections, muſt neceſſarily intangle himſelf in infinite Labyrinths, through the courſe of his life. For having ſeveral ends to purſue, and thoſe many times inconſiſtent one with another; it cannot be avoided but that in many

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circumſtances he lights into, he will be extreamly at a loſs how to behave himſelf. If he go this way, then will ſomething come to Light, which he ſtudiouſly endeavours to conceal; If he go that way, then he diſobliges ſome man or ſome party whoſe intereſt is neceſſary to ſupport him; If he go a third way, he deſtroys that which is his main deſign. At what a loſs now in ſuch a caſe as this muſt a man needs be in the determining himſelf? Upon what a rack is his underſtanding put, to get fairly rid of theſe difficulties? And yet ſuch Dilemmas, as theſe, is every one that walks not Uprightly, ever and anon crampt with in his Counſels and Deliberations.

But ſuppoſe he get well over the preſent difficulty, yet he is but where he was: For upon the next emergency of affairs he is as much puzled and nonpluſt as before. The ſame method will not ſerve him twice for the carrying on his deſigns. As often as new occaſions ariſe, ſo often muſt he alter his Counſels, and take new meaſures: ſo that he is always unſteady; often inconſiſtent with himſelf; utterly unreſolv'd what man he ſhall be, or what part he ſhall act, in the next ſcene that offers itſelf.

Theſe difficulties and perplexities the man of Intrigues is always hamper'd with; and they neceſſarily ariſe from the various flexures and tur-

turnings of the way that leads to his ends: But the contrary of all this, is the Lot of the Upright man. For his way neither lies on this side, nor on that side, but always straight forward. He hath but one great end to pursue, and that is to discharge a good conscience: all his other concernments are wholly regulated by that. The consequence of which is, That he hath no clashing of interests to perplex his deliberations; No little turns that must be served, to divert him to the right hand or to the left, but he always looks straight before him: so that all his resolutions are easily made; most of those difficulties that intangle other men are quite cut off and avoided; his Counsels and his Methods are always the same; and he is seldom at a loss how to behave himself upon a new emergency. In a word, his way is commonly so plain that he stands in need of little advice or instruction for the finding it. And this is that which *Solomon* hath told us, *The Integrity of the Upright shall guide him.* For, *the path of the just is a shining light.* Prov. 11. 3. cap. 4. 18.

But secondly, If it be his Lot to fall into such circumstances, where his way is not so plain; but that there is need of great advice and deliberation what course to steer; as it often happens, especially in such times as the Text speaks of: Yet here the Upright man hath the advantage of all

all those that walk by different principles; For (all other things equal) he has more *Light* to direct him in the finding of his way than they have.

There is this difference, between a man that walks Uprightly in all his conversation, and a man that hath sinister ends of his own to pursue: The former hath always the free use of his Intellectual Powers, and can exert his reason in its highest perfection, and to the best advantage: Whereas the latter is horribly clouded in his discerning faculties. He hath constantly a mist before his eyes, which hinders him from rightly distinguishing the objects he looks upon; and consequently occasions many blunders and mistakes in the choice of his way.

My meaning is this, Whoever frames his life by other Measures than those of Honesty and Conscience; whoever intemperately pursueth his private ends, or is a slave to inordinate passions, let them be of what kind they will: these things do clap such a Byas upon his Soul, as renders him utterly uncapable of making a right judgment of things before him, and consequently must unavoidably expose him to a great many dangerous errors in the management of his affairs; and this oftentimes in matters that have nō great difficulty in them.

Take any one of the passions that usually govern

govern the man that hath no principles of Conſcience, Let it be either Fear, or Envy, or Revenge, or Vain-glory, or Avarice, or Ambition; it is a wonderfull thing to ſee, how monſtrouſly they diſtort his Reaſon, and what odd extravagant courſes they put him upon; and this even in plain eaſy caſes; Nay, though the man, in other things, where his affections have no influence, be a very wiſe man. One could ſcarce imagine the power that theſe things have over a mans Judgment; but that we every day ſee ſuch ſtrange inſtances of it.

But now the Upright man is not in the leaſt obnoxious to any of theſe inconveniences: For having no turns to ſerve but thoſe that are honeſt and good; having no private Affections or Paſſions to be gratified; he looks upon things in a pure and ſimple Light, and not through a coloured glaſs. And conſequently his conceptions of them, as far as humane endeavours can ſecure, are according to their nature; and his determinations and reſolutions are ſuitable to his conceptions; that is to ſay, are reaſonable, and fit, and ſuch as become the occaſion. As his main deſign is to doe in all inſtances that which is beſt; ſo that deſign preſerves him from miſtaking in his Notions of what is beſt. His Reaſon and Underſtanding are free and at liberty; and if there do ariſe any knot or difficul-

ty, he of all others is likely to untie it with the greateſt eaſe. And this is that which the Pſalmiſt hath told us, *The fear of the Lord is the beginning of Wiſedome, a good Underſtanding have all they that doe thereafter.* Pſal. 111. 10.

But ſecondly, If we take *Light*, for Safety and Security, for Defence and Protection, as it is ſometimes uſed in the holy Scripture: In this ſenſe alſo *Light ariſeth to the Upright in times of Darkneſs.* For ſuch a man may in the worſt of times, above all other men promiſe theſe things to himſelf. And this is that which *Solomon* tells us, *He that walketh Uprightly walketh ſurely.* Prov. 10. 9. And indeed this ſeems to be the thing principally intended in the Text; The *Light* which is here ſaid to *ariſe to the Upright in Darkneſs*, ſeemeth chiefly to reſpect his Security from Danger in the times of a common Calamity; as appears by what immediately followeth; viz. *He ſhall not be moved for ever; he ſhall not be afraid of evil tidings; his heart ſhall not ſhrink untill he ſee his deſire upon his Enemies.*

Now this Security in times of Danger the Upright man may expect upon theſe two accounts. Firſt, His Uprightneſs in its own nature (as things are contrived and carried on in the world) doth above all other things conduce to it. And ſecondly, He is upon account there-

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of intituled to Gods more particular protection.

First, The Paths of Uprightness are in themselves such as naturally tend to secure a man in Evil and Dangerous times.

For first, They do really contribute to the Good and Happiness of the Publick, in the which every mans private safety is in a manner bound up. *As by wickedness* (they are the words of *Solomon*) *a City is overthrown: so by the blessing of the Upright it is exalted.* Every Upright man, is really a benefactor to the Publick: For by him and such as he, Cities and Kingdoms are supported which would otherwise fall into confusion. The whole Body politick owes its preservation to the Virtuous Care, and Honest Endeavours of Upright men. And every such man in particular reaps the benefit of such his Endeavours; For he shares in his own person that protection and security he procures to the Community. And if he had not been Upright, as the publick would have fared something the worse for it: So it is certain he in his private Capacity, would in the same proportion, have fared the worse also. Prov. 11. 11.

But this consideration of the conducivenes of Honesty and Uprightness to the good of the Publick, I direct chiefly to those that are in Office and Authority; for really their carriage

and conduct hath a more than ordinary ſtroak in the good or bad ſucceſs of the common affairs. And therefore it concerns them eſpecially to look to themſelves that they be Men of Integrity, and keep a good Conſcience in the diſcharge of their truſt. Upon their Upright walking, the ſafety and preſervation of the Publick doth more depend than upon the Endeavours of a thouſand private men. Though they are but particular perſons, yet being veſted with Authority; their Conduct and Management hath as great an influence upon the common good or the common ruin, as if they were a Multitude; and ſingle as they are, they do in a great meaſure carry the ballance of the publick Fortune in their hands.

But ſecondly, The conduciveneſs of every mans Uprightneſs, to the publick good is not the onely conſideration, upon which it is recommendable, as a means for obtaining ſafety and ſecurity in evil times. For let the publick go as it will: In the worſt of times; if any man can in probability be thought able to ſhift for himſelf; if any man can in reaſon hope to eſcape the Violence and Iniquity of the times; the Upright man, the man of Honeſty and Integrity is likelyeſt to be the man: I ſay in reaſon he is likelyeſt and as things commonly go. For he of all others takes the ſureſt courſe to preſerve

preſerve himſelf; and is leaſt obnoxious either to the malice or the envy, the undermining or the rapine, of open Enemies or pretended Friends.

All knavery and diſhoneſt dealings ſet a man up for a mark to be ſhot at; but Uprightneſs and Integrity is a ſhield and a protection.

The Upright man doth ſo order the courſe of his life, that he uſually avoids all thoſe rocks that other men ſplit upon, and which uſually prove their ruin. The undoing of moſt men even in evil times, lies commonly at their own door, and they may thank themſelves for it. If they had been ſufficiently carefull of themſelves, the malignity of the times would ſcarce have toucht them. It is generally either very great careleſneſs and groſs neglect of their own affairs; or the laviſhneſs or intemperance of their Tongues; or an ill gotten Eſtate; or private Injuries they have done, and private grudges they have contracted; or pragmaticalneſs in other mens matters; or factious adherence to a party; or breach of truſt; or treachery to the publick, or the like: I ſay, it is theſe things that do moſt commonly draw miſchief upon mens heads, and lay the foundations of all thoſe ſtraits and difficulties in which they are intangled even in the worſt of times. But now the Upright man doth in a great meaſure avoid all

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theſe occaſions; for his principles do oblige him to walk in a way that is diametrically oppoſite to the things I have mentioned.

The Upright man treads upon ſuch ſure foundations, and his ways are ſo univerſally approved by mankind; that, as things uſually go, no man will eaſily offer him injury but it will be to his own detriment.

The Rule he walks by is ſuch, as doth effectually procure him the moſt friends and the feweſt enemies, for he takes the courſe to oblige all ſorts of men; and conſequently he cannot eaſily fail, of finding thoſe who will uſe their utmoſt endeavour to aſſiſt and reſcue him when he lights into any difficult circumſtances.

His righteous converſation is ſo unexceptionable; and ſo prudent he is in the management of his affairs; that thoſe that love him not, will not eaſily find an occaſion to doe him much miſchief.

Even thoſe that have no acquaintance with him, yet have ſo much concernment for Honeſty and Uprightneſs in general, that they will ſtudy to give him what aſſiſtance and defence they can, out of a natural ſenſe that it is fit a good man ſhould be protected; and that, for any thing they know, his caſe and circumſtances may come to be theirs.

And

And thoſe that have loſt all ſenſe of good and evil, yet out of care to preſerve their credit amongſt men (amongſt the generality of whom, to be an honeſt man will always ſignifie a great deal; for when all is done, it is impoſſible to extirpate the notions of Virtue and Honeſty out of the minds of the multitude:) I ſay, in point of their own credit and intereſt they are concern'd to be carefull how they oppreſs ſuch a man.

But whatever become of theſe things; how ineffectual ſoever all humane means may be, for the ſecuring and preſerving an Upright man in evil times: Yet in the ſecond place, he has another Anchor to ſtay himſelf upon, which is more firm and ſtable, and which will not fail him: and that is the protection of God Almighty: The care of his particular providence to which he is intituled.

Men may plot and deſign; may model and contrive; may order and manage things as they pleaſe: But when all is done, it is God that governeth the world; and either blaſts their moſt fair and hopefull projects; or if he ſuffers them to ſucceed, turns them to what uſe and purpoſes he pleaſes: Now this God that Rules and diſpoſeth all things (even the moſt particular; *For not a ſparrow doth fall to the ground without his will; and by him the very hairs of our head are numbred*) This God hath engaged

ged himſelf, to take care in an eſpecial manner, of thoſe that fear him, and walk Uprightly before him.

Pſal. 37. v. 6, 19, 24, 40, 41. He hath paſſed his Promiſe over and over again, that he will *make their Righteouſneſs as clear as the Light, and their juſt dealing as the noon day. They ſhall not be confounded in the perilous time, and in the days of dearth they ſhall have enough. Though they fall they ſhall not be caſt down, for the Lord upholdeth them with his hand.* In a word, that he *will be their ſtrength in the time of trouble; he will ſtand by them and ſave them, he will deliver them from the ungodly; he will ſave them becauſe they put their truſt in him.*

It would be endleſs to quote all the paſſages in the book of God that ſpeak to this purpoſe. And therefore I ſhall diſmiſs this point with that remarkable one which we find in the Prophecy Cap. 33. v. 15, 16. of *Iſaiah*, wherein we may ſee, both the Upright man, and his ſecurity in evil times, deſcribed in very lively colours. *He that walketh Righteouſly and ſpeaketh Uprightly; He that deſpiſeth the gain of oppreſſions; that ſhaketh his hands from holding of bribes; that ſtoppeth his ears from hearing of bloud; and ſhutteth his eyes from ſeeing evil: He ſhall dwell on high; his place of defence ſhall be the munitions of Rocks; his bread ſhall be given him; his water ſhall be ſure.* The ſence

of

of which in ſhort is this, That whoever walks Uprightly and makes a conſcience of his ways: ſuch a man ſhall be always under the watchfull care and protection of the Divine Providence. And never will God ſuffer him, to fall into any grievous diſtreſs; but he ſhall always have ſuch a portion of the good things of this world afforded to him, as will be ſufficient not onely to make his life ſupportable, but eaſy.

And in truth, The experience of the world generally makes this good: Honeſt and Upright men for the moſt part, in the moſt publick calamities fare well; at leaſt much better than thoſe that are not ſo. In their greateſt extremities when they have no proſpect of deliverance from any humane means, ſtrange extraordinary unexpected ſuccour and relief doth arrive to them. In a word, that care of the ſpecial Providence of God attends them that they are never miſerable, however they may be now and then cut ſhort in their outward fortunes.

But it muſt be acknowledged, that though Piety and Uprightneſs hath the promiſe of ſecurity in this Life; and that promiſe for the moſt part, and in general ſpeaking is made good: Yet there are a great many exempt caſes. God may ſee it fit now and then to ſuffer an Upright man to be oppreſt, and to periſh in a common ruin; and this without any violation of his Promiſes

of this kind, which do indeed reſpect no more than the ordinary common events and ſucceſſes of things. But yet even in this caſe ſtill there will *To the Upright ariſe Light in the Darkneſs*; that is, *Light* in the third ſence we have given of the word, *viz.* taking *Light* for Peace and Joy and Comfort. And this is that which the Pſalmiſt tells us in another place, *Light is ſown for the Righteous, and Gladneſs for the Upright in heart.* Pſal. 97. 11.

Whatever Afflictions come upon the Upright man, yet he hath this advantage of other men, that he bears them infinitely more lightly than they do; They are really no great diſturbance to him, for he injoys the ſame calmneſs and ſerenity of mind, the ſame peace and quiet, and contentment that ever he did.

His preſent ſufferings are rather matter of rejoycing and triumph to him, than of diſcontent and repining, for he knows that they come upon him, by the Counſel and Diſpoſal of the great Governour of the World: And he knows that he hath ſo ſincerely approved himſelf to God, and is ſo well beloved by him; that he ſhould not have been ordered into theſe circumſtances, had it not been really for his good. And this conſideration doth ſo effectually ſupport him under all the difficulties that he hath to conflict with, that he not onely ſits down

down easily and quietly, but is very well pleased with the dispensations of the Divine Providence towards him; how ingratefull soever they may be to flesh and bloud.

Let what will happen to him, he is full of Peace and Joy. For he hath met with no disappointment of his designs. His great aim was to please God; and his Conscience from Gods word assures him that he has done it; and he hath nothing to doe farther but to wait for the happy time, when the secrets of all hearts shall be revealed, and every mans Counsels and Actions shall be made manifest, and then he doubts not to receive approbation and praise, and a great Reward in that Day of the Lord *Jesus*. And so much the rather, *because this light affliction, wherewith he is now exercised*, he is assured, *will work for him a far more exceeding and eternal weight of Glory*. 2 Cor. 4. 17.

To conclude, Whatever his sufferings be; he will live and die in a profound peace; perfectly satisfied with all Gods dealings towards him: And his Life and Death will verify to all that know him that advice and observation of the Psalmist; *Mark the Perfect man, and behold the Upright, for the end of that man is Peace.* Psal. 37. 37.

THE END.

A

SERMON

Preached at

WHITE-HALL,

IN

LENT,

On *Friday*, *March* 20. $168\frac{4}{5}$.

BY

JOHN SHARP, D. D.

Dean of *Norwich.*

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A

SERMON

Preached at

WHITE-HALL.

LUKE XVI. 31.

—If they hear not Moſes and the Prophets, neither will they be perſuaded though one roſe from the dead.

THE Parable of the Rich man and *Lazarus* in the Goſpel is ſo well known, that it is needleſs to relate the Particulars of it. Theſe Words are the Concluſion of that Parable, and they are made the Words of *Abraham*, who being in Paradiſe, is brought in as ſpeaking them to the Rich man in Hell.

The Occaſion was this. This now Poor man

not being able to obtain the leaſt Comfort or Refreſhment for himſelf under that unſupportable anguiſh he endured; bethinks himſelf of his Friends and Relations in the World, and caſts about how to prevent their coming to that ſad condition. And for this purpoſe, he begs of *Abraham*, that he would be pleaſed to ſend the Happy *Lazarus* into the World again, to teſtifie to his Brethren what he knew and had ſeen concerning the State of the other Life; and to exhort them to a timely Repentance, leſt they ſhould come into that place of Torment in which he was.

To this Requeſt, *Abraham* thus anſwers. *They had Moſes and the Prophets*, which did plainly enough teſtifie againſt their Sins, and offered ſufficient Motives to them to repent; and therefore there was no need of ſuch extraordinary Means as he deſired.

But this Anſwer did not ſatisfie the miſerable man. Still he purſues his former Requeſt. *Nay, Father Abraham,* (ſaith he) *but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent.* There was no reſiſting ſuch an Argument as that. If *Lazarus*, whom they all had known living, and now knew to be dead, ſhould riſe again, and perſonally come to them, and tell them in what a ſad condition he had ſeen their Friend, and that they muſt all expect to run the ſame Fortune, if they did not

change

change their Course of Living: This would come close to them, and be more convincing than a hundred Arguments drawn from the Books of *Moses* and the Prophets, which were written many Ages before their time, and so consequently could not be presumed to have so great a force as an Argument drawn from their own Sense and Experience.

To this Reply of the Rich man, *Abraham* peremptorily rejoins in the Words of the Text. *If they hear not Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be perswaded though one rose from the dead.*

To omit lesser Matters that may be observed from these Words; the Point which primarily, and most naturally seems to be offered to our Consideration from them, is this. *That those who give no credit to a setled standing Revelation of God once well attested, or are not thereby prevailed upon to reform their Evil manners; neither in all probability would they be prevailed upon, though a particular Miracle was wrought by God in order to their Conversion; as, for instance, though one should rise from the dead and appear to them.*

Now to satisfie every one of the Truth of this Proposition, it will be abundantly sufficient to make out these two things.

First, That there is really more force and weight in a Publick standing Revelation of God, such as that

that was by *Moſes* and the Prophets here mentioned, to convince men, or to reclaim them; than there can be in a Private Miracle, though I ſee it with my Eyes.

And ſecondly, Though God ſhould be pleaſed to work a Miracle, or to ſend an Apparition for the Conviction of an obſtinate Unbeliever or vicious Perſon; yet ſuch a one would as eaſily find out ſhifts and ways to evade the force of ſuch an Argument, and to hinder the Effect it ought to have upon him, as he formerly did to put off the ordinary ſtanding Motives and Arguments of Religion: And conſequently, there is little probability, that he who is not gained by the former, will be wrought upon by the latter.

I begin with the firſt of theſe things. *That there is really more force and weight in a Publick ſtanding Revelation of God, to convince men, or to reclaim them; than there can be ſuppoſed to be in a Private ſingle Miracle, though a man ſees it with his Eyes: Or, than there can be in an Apparition from the dead, if God ſhould think fit to vouchſafe ſuch a thing.*

In ſpeaking to this, I mean not to concern my ſelf or you with the Revelation of *Moſes* and the Prophets, though that be the Revelation which the Text here ſpeaks of. I think it will be more ſuitable and uſeful to us to conſider the Propoſition with relation to Chriſtianity, or the Revelation of

our

our Saviour and his Apoſtles: That being the Diſpenſation we are now under, and in which we are more immediately concerned.

Underſtanding therefore our Propoſition of that Eſpecial Revelation which we call the Goſpel, two things there are to be offered, which will undeniably make it out.

Firſt, Thoſe Perſons that lived in the Times of our Saviour, when this Publick Revelation of the Goſpel was made and atteſted, had greater Evidences and Motives to bring them over to the Belief and Practice of Religion; than if any particular Miracle had been wrought in order to their Converſion.

Secondly, We at this day, all things conſidered, have as ſtrong Arguments to convince us, as powerful Motives to perſuade us, as thoſe that lived in the Times of our Saviour, and were Witneſſes of what he did and taught.

The unavoidable Conſequences of which two Points are theſe. That thoſe who lived in the time of our Saviour, and were not perſuaded by his Goſpel, would not have been perſuaded though one had been ſent to them from the dead. And thoſe that are now alive, and are not perſuaded by the Evidences and Motives of Chriſtianity which we now have among us, would not have been perſuaded if they had lived in the Times of our

our Saviour. So that in all Ages of Christianity the Proposition will hold true, That those who give no credit to the standing Revelation of the Gospel, or are not thereby induced to lead their Lives according to it; would not be prevailed upon though a particular Miracle was wrought for their Conversion.

First then, *Our Saviour's Gospel at the first publishing of it was a more effectual Means for the Conversion of any Man then living, than the sending to him one from the dead.*

Let us suppose the Parable we are now upon, to be a true History; and that this Rich man had five Brethren living at *Jerusalem* at the time when our Saviour spoke it; and they were all wicked, lewd, Atheistical Persons; and God Almighty, in pity to their Souls, is pleased to grant that Request which the Rich man here makes to *Abraham* on their behalf; and accordingly sends *Lazarus* from the dead to preach Repentance to them: We cannot doubt but such a Sermon, from such a Man, and in such Circumstances, would mightily awaken them, and put them upon a more serious Consideration of the folly of their Ways, and the danger they exposed them to, than ever they entred into before; and this Consideration it is likely might work them to serious Resolutions of quitting their present Courses, and entring upon

a ſtricter Life. Certainly ſuch an Apparition as this, in reaſon ſhould work ſuch Effects; and, without doubt, upon many it would. But this we ſay. Whether did not our Saviour perform a great deal more than all this comes to, in order to the Conviction and Converſion of all about him? And whether had not theſe five Brethren, ſuppoſing them to live when he preached his Goſpel, and to be Witneſſes of his Actions, much more reaſon to be perſuaded by what he did, and taught, than by the aforeſaid Viſion?

Our Saviour did by all the Signs and Tokens in the World evidence himſelf to be an Expreſs Meſſenger ſent from God, which they could not be certain that the Viſion was.

The Prophetick Records of their own Country did all teſtifie of him; and they themſelves, by comparing his Life and them together, might ſee they were fulfilled in him.

To omit the Circumſtances of his Birth, which were ſuch as never any beſides himſelf was born with; After he came to enter upon his Publick Employment, God did more than once by a Voice from Heaven teſtifie, that he had ſent him, and that all People were to hearken to him.

And the Truth of this he himſelf confirmed, not onely by his Life, which was the moſt Innocent, and Vertuous, and God-like that ever was:

Nor onely by his Sermons and Doctrines, which were the most Perfect and Unexceptionable, and every way the most worthy of God, that ever were taught among Men: But also, and most chiefly, by his extraordinary Works, which were such as none but God, or one Acted by a Divine Power, could possibly perform.

He did the greatest things that ever were seen by Men. He shewed by his Actions, and those most publickly done, and frequently repeated, that he had an absolute Sovereign Power over the Course of Nature, over the Invisible Agents of this World, as well Angels as Devils, and likewise over both the Bodies and the Souls of Men.

And particularly to make it appear that his Testimony was more Authentick, his Authority more to be relied on, than that of any Ghost, any *Lazarus* whatsoever that should rise from the dead: It was very usual with him to send again to the Living those that were once dead. And one *Lazarus* he really brought again from the Bosom of *Abraham*, after he had been four days dead, to testifie to the World that *Jesus* was the Great Embassador that God had sent, and that all Mankind were to receive and obey him.

And lest all this should not be convincing enough, lest it should be said still, One that should rise from the dead, and come and preach to us,

would

would leave the greater Impreſſions upon us: *Jeſus* himſelf did riſe from the dead, and did come and preach to the World, and that in a far more convincing manner than the Ghoſt of *Lazarus* would have done, if the Rich man had had his own Wiſh. For *Jeſus* told his own Death before-hand, and foretold alſo his Reſurrection; And if God meant not to lay an invincible Temptation before Mankind to believe a Falſhood, it had concerned his Providence to have hindred this Reſurrection, if *Jeſus* had been any thing elſe than what he pretended to be: But he did riſe after three days, according to his Prediction, and converſed upon Earth with his Followers for forty days together, ſhewing himſelf not onely to a few particular Diſciples, but to great Crowds of them, Five hundred at a time. And after this, in the ſight of his Friends he took his leave of the World, and aſcended up into Heaven. And for a Teſtimony how God approved him there, he ſent down the Holy Spirit upon his Diſciples, who for many years together enabled them to do our Saviour's Miracles over again, in confirmation of his Doctrine.

If now, to come to our Argument; if theſe five Brethren of the Rich man be ſuppoſed to be alive when all theſe things came to paſs; If they had the Opportunity of being preſent at many

of these Passages, and of satisfying themselves of the rest, (as certainly, supposing the Matter of Fact to be true, none that lived at that time, and in that Country, but had this Opportunity;) If they heard this *Jesus* that was sent from God at the first, and that was sent from God the second time, after he was dead, testifying against their Sins, forewarning them of the Judgment to come, and assuring them of Eternal Rewards if they would repent: I say, If they were Witnesses of these things, I will appeal to all the World, whether they had not greater Means of Conviction offered to them, than if any Ghost had appeared to them from the Dead; or any particular Miracle had been vouchsafed them for the bringing them over to Vertue and Sobriety.

But I believe no body will much doubt of this; for indeed the Matter will not bear a Dispute. But here is the Question; Whether we that live at this distance from our Saviour, have the same Means of Conviction? and, Whether one now appearing from the dead to us, would not be of greater force to perswade us, than the standing Revelation of the Gospel, as we have it now conveyed to us?

This therefore leads me to my second Proposition upon this Head, which if it can be made out, will wholly take away all Controversie in this matter. And it is this: *That*

That we at this day have as great Arguments to convince us of the Truth of Christ's Revelation, and consequently as great Motives from thence to perſuade us to reform our Evil Lives, as thoſe that lived in the Times of our Saviour.

It is true indeed, we want the Evidence of Senſe in theſe Matters, which they had; and upon that account, it muſt be acknowledged, that they have the Advantage of us. But this we ſay, notwithſtanding, That if we take all things together, and weigh them Impartially, we ſhall find, that that Want is abundantly ſupplied to us in other reſpects.

For, *firſt* of all, Our Saviour's Goſpel, and all the Evidences of it I have been now ſpeaking of, were timely and faithfully recorded, and are as faithfully tranſmitted down to us. So that though we did not ſee or hear thoſe things, yet we have a certain and exact Account of them; and ſuch an Account as was never yet queſtioned by any Adverſaries that lived in thoſe Times, when ſuch a Queſtion was moſt reaſonably to be made; and ſuch an Account as appears by all the Evidences that a thing of that nature is capable of, to have been written by Eye-witneſſes, and ſuch Witneſſes as were honeſt undeſigning Men; and not onely ſo, but they ſealed with their Blood the Truth of what they reported. And this ſame Account was religiouſly

religiously received by all Christians, in all Places, without contradiction, in those very Times, and was shortly after translated into a multitude of Languages, so that it is scarce possible it should in any Considerable matter be corrupted. And from that time to this, in a continual succession, there have been men that have suffer'd Martyrdom for the Attestation of it; and in the first Ages after *Christ*, when they had the best Opportunities of examining the Truth of these things, many thousands did so.

Now I say, Though according to the ordinary Proverb, *Seeing be believing*: Yet next to Seeing, an Universal, Well-grounded Tradition, which hath visible Effects attending it, hath the most force to gain belief. Nay, I do not know whether there be so much difference between the Evidence of the one and the other, as one would think at first. Sure I am, there are many Cases in which we do as firmly believe Matters of Fact upon the Credit of Tradition, and the permanent Effects that do accompany it, as if we our selves had been present, and seen them with our Eyes. Which of us, for Instance, doth make any more doubt of the Story of *William* the Conquerour his subduing this Kingdom, or of *Henry* the Eighth his casting off the Pope's Supremacy; than he doth of the Revolutions that have hapned in his

his own time? And yet these Matters of Fact are not better attested than the History of our Saviour, and his Miracles and Doctrines.

But, *secondly*, Though those that lived in our Saviour's time had evidence of Sense for the truth of what they believed concerning him and his Doctrine, which we have not: Yet this is to be considered; that they laboured under far greater Prejudices against his Religion, than we now do: And consequently, all that sensible Proof which they had of the Truth of it, would not be more effectual for the convincing of them; than that Proof we now have, though it be less, ought in reason to be for the convincing of us.

They that were the Hearers and Spectators of what our Saviour said and did, had mighty and inveterate Prepossessions to struggle with. They were educated in a quite different Religion, and so must be supposed to have entertained several Notions and Principles which would very difficultly be rooted out; and indeed, for the effecting of it, there needed little less than an Almighty Power. But it is not so with us; we by our Education are already disposed and prepared for the receiving Christianity. We have no prævious Engagements to alienate our Minds from it; nay, it is our Interest to be of that Religion, rather than any other. So that certainly a less Evidence for

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the Truth of it, will be as convincing to us, as a much greater would have been to those to whom our Saviour first Preached. Nay, I am very confident that this thing being duely considered, it will appear, that our Arguments for Christianity drawn from Tradition, will be more convincing to thinking men among us, than those Arguments they had from Sense and Experience could be to them.

But, *thirdly*, If to what hath been said we add the several Arguments for the Credibility of the Christian Religion which we now have at this distance, that they had not, nor could have, that were our Saviour's Immediate Disciples; we shall be satisfied, that in point of Evidence we have indeed much the advantage of them. We have now several standing Proofs of our Religion, which they could not have; and which are so strong and conclusive, that they do more than compensate for the want of that Evidence of Sense which they had, and we have not. I briefly instance in these three following.

First, The strange Propagation and Success of our Religion throughout the World, and the Means by which it was effected. That a poor despised crucified Person should in a few years draw all the *Roman* Empire after him; and that without any visible Means, except the Goodness of his

his Cauſe, and the Reaſonableneſs of his Doctrine, and the Sincerity and Conſtancy of his Diſciples, not in fighting for their Maſter, but in laying down their Lives for him: And this againſt all the Power, and all the Arts and Stratagems that the Devil or the Princes of this World could invent to ſtifle and ſuppreſs his Name: This is ſo ſtrong an Argument that this Cauſe was the Cauſe of God, and that his Providence was particularly concerned in the promoting of it, that he muſt ſeem little to be ſenſible either of God or Providence, that is not convinced by it.

If Chriſtianity had been of the ſame ſtrain that the Religion of *Mahomet* is; had been as well calculated for Mens Luſts and Worldly Intereſts, as that is; had allowed as many ſenſual Liberties to its Diſciples as that doth; and laſtly, had been carried on in the World by the ſame ways and means that that hath been, that is, by the Force of Arms and Dint of the Sword; It would have been no great wonder that it ſhould have prevailed, as we ſee it hath done. But that a Religion which had no Worldly Advantages to promiſe to its Followers; nay, on the contrary, was ſo contrived, that none could own it, but he muſt at the ſame time deny all his Temporal Intereſts, quit his Friends, his Reputation, and all his Fortunes in this World, and live in hourly expectati-

on of a Martyrdom; that ſuch a Religion as this, ſhould not onely not die with the firſt Broachers of it, but daily grow and ſpread; and the more it was perſecuted, the more increaſe; till at laſt it ſo weathered out all Oppoſition, that it got Poſſeſſion of the Thrones of Princes, and Kings became Nurſing Fathers to it: I ſay, Whoever is not convinced that the Finger of God was in this, would ſcarce have been convinced that the Finger of God was in our Saviour's Miracles, had he been alive and preſent when they were done. But this Effect of Chriſtianity both the Prophets and our Lord long ago foretold, and this we now ſee was verified long ago, and is ſtill verified in our days: Though thoſe that lived with our Saviour had no experience hereof, nor perhaps would ſeveral of them have been forward to believe, it though it had been told them. So that in this reſpect we have a moſt Conſiderable Argument for our Religion, which they had not.

Secondly, This is not all. Thoſe that undertook the Religion of our Saviour upon his Preaching, had no experience of it: They were to be the firſt Experimenters themſelves. They ran a great Riſque, and ventured the Sale of all that they had, and yet knew not ſo certainly what kind of Treaſure they ſhould purchaſe. But we have the Experience and Suffrage of Sixteen Ages, which will

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all vouch, that what we lay out in this way will prove valuable Treasure, will reward all the Pains and all the Expence we are at for the purchasing of it. We have never in the compass of our own knowledge, nor in all History, met with any who seriously laid out themselves in the Service of *Jesus Christ*, and lived up to his Religion, that ever grudged the Pains they took about it, or repented themselves that they believed or practised as they did. The more any Man has been a Christian, still the more he hath thanked God for it; still the more Quiet of Mind and Peace of Conscience he hath possessed; the more he hath enjoyed himself, and the less he hath feared Death and all other outward Calamities. If ever any Christian hath repented of any thing, it is, that he hath not been Christian enough, that he hath not so heartily believed in our Saviour, and obeyed his Precepts, as he should have done. This we all know, and must be sensible of; and it is a mighty Evidence of the Truth and Goodness of the Religion we profess. We now can try our Religion, and give our Approbation of it, by the same Standard and Measures, by which we try and approve of our Customs and Common Laws. After long experience we find the Usefulness and the Conveniency of it, and to put another in its place, would involve us in horrible Mischiefs, and Dangers, and

Perplexities. But this Argument for Christianity, those that were the first Converts to it could not have, and therefore in this respect also we have the advantage of them.

Thirdly and lastly, There is another very Considerable standing Argument for the Truth of the Christian Revelation, which those in our Saviour's time were uncapable of; and that is, the Events which he by the Spirit of Prophecy foretold should after his death come to pass in the World; most of which have punctually hapned as he predicted them, and the rest in due time we doubt not will be accomplished. I have not leisure to prosecute this Argument particularly; onely two things I cannot pass by without mention, in both of which our Lord shewed himself as wonderful and as true a Prophet as ever appeared in the World.

The one is, the Destruction of *Jerusalem* and the Temple, which he foretold with all the Circumstances imaginable, both as to Time and Manner. Now all that he said concerning that Destruction, was punctually verified, even according to the Accounts that the *Jewish* Historian gives us of that Matter. And when afterwards *Julian* the Emperour, with a design to blast the Credit of our Saviour's Prophecy, resolved to re-edifie that Temple, and set Men on work for that purpose;

purpoſe; he was ſoon forced to deſiſt from his Enterpriſe, by Earthquakes, and Globes of Fire iſſuing from out of the Foundations: As the Writers of that time, both Chriſtian and Pagan, do aſſure us.

The other Inſtance I mention is, our Saviour's Prophecy of the Rejection of the *Jews*, and that they ſhould be *carried Captive into all Nations till the Times of the Gentiles were fulfilled.* Now this we ſee hath been accompliſhed for many Ages, and ſtill continues to be ſo in our days. That Nation of the *Jews* who were once the Peculiar People of God, ſetled in the Land of *Canaan* by his own immediate Hand, are now diſperſed all the World over, but no where incorporated into a Nation. Yet, which indeed is wonderful, they continue *Jews* ſtill; a People that mingle not with the reſt of the World, and that are ſtill as zealous for the Scriptures, from whence we fetch the Grounds of our Chriſtianity, as ever they were. So that they are a ſtanding Monument of God's Vengeance upon a People for rejecting the Goſpel, and a ſtanding Teſtimony of the Truth of our Saviour's Prophecies.

Theſe things now, with others that I might name, are very conſiderable Evidences of the Truth of our Religion, which thoſe that were Contemporary with our Saviour could not have.

So

ſo that putting all theſe things together, I think we may ſafely draw our Concluſion, *viz.* That we now have as great or greater Arguments to convince us of the truth of Chriſts Revelation, as, or than they had who were Witneſſes of what he did and taught. And conſequently, thoſe that are not perſwaded now by the Evidence of it, would not have been perſwaded though they had ſeen with their Eyes, or heard with their Ears the Publication of the Goſpel: Which is in effect to ſay, They would not have been perſwaded though one had riſen from the dead.

But notwithſtanding all this that I have ſaid, it is to be feared the thing will not eaſily go down with many of us; but ſtill, with the Rich Man in the Parable, after all that *Abraham* had ſaid concerning *Moſes* and the Prophets, we will inſiſt on our former Notion. *Nay, but if one came to us from the Dead, we ſhould repent.* The Motives that are offered to us in the Goſpel are old and ſtale to us, we find by long experience, that they make no great impreſſions upon us: But if we were viſited in ſuch an extraordinary way as the Rich man here deſired for his Brethren, we ſhould then undoubtedly be prevailed upon. Thus I believe ſeveral of us think: But that we have little ground for ſuch a fancy; nay, indeed, if we were tried in this way, that it is ten to one, we ſhould find

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our ſelves miſtaken; this may further convince us, *viz.*

If God ſhould indeed vouchſafe to work a Miracle, or to ſend an Apparition for the Conviction of an Obſtinate Unbeliver, or vicious Perſon: Yet ſuch a one would as eaſily find out ſhifts and ways to evade the force of ſuch an Argument, and to hinder the effects it ought to have upon him, as he formerly did to put off the ſtanding Motives and Arguments of Religion. And conſequently, there is little probability that he who is deaf to Moſes and the Prophets, will be perſwaded by one from the dead.

This is the ſecond Point I laid down for the proof of our Saviours Propoſition, and I come now to ſpeak to it.

I deny not indeed, but if an Apparition ſhould be made to a wicked Perſon among us: If, for inſtance, One of our Companions ſhould, after he is dead, in a terrible manner come to any of us, and in a doleful tone and language tell us, how it goes with him in the other World; tell us, that there is indeed a God that judges the Earth, that there is a Heaven, that there is a Hell, (all which things he as well as we made it our buſineſs to baniſh out of our minds as much as we could;) and acquaint us what an infinite unſpeakable happineſs he hath loſt by living looſely and carelеſly, as we now do, and that he is damned, irrecoverably

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and for ever damned for that Infidelity, and those lewd courses we shared with him in the guilt of, and do still continue to pursue; that all those Revels we had together, all those Pranks and Debauches we were joint Actors in, do now, as to him, end in unsupportable anguish and pains, in the gnawings of a Worm that never dies, and in a life of everlasting Burnings; and that this shall certainly be our portion as well as his, unless we do prevent it by a speedy reformation of our Lives:

I say, If one of our Friends should come from the Dead, and tell us all this, there is no doubt but it would strike us with infinite horrour and amazement. It would be the most confounding Scene that ever our Eyes beheld, the most awakening Lecture that ever our Ears heard; and such impressions it would, in all likelihood, make upon us, as would not suddenly be worn out.

But here is the point, Whether all this would be effectual for the working a perfect change of Life, a lasting Reformation, upon a Man that hath long resisted the ordinary means of Conversion, and by long custom of sinning hath made a course of Vice almost natural to him? We say, in all probability it would not be effectual for the reforming such a Man; because it would be so easie after the first Heats, which the Vision occasioned,

ſioned, were over, to find out colourable excuſes, and evaſions why he ſhould not purſue a Reformation, which his Soul ſo much hated, and which his preſent Intereſts and Appetites were ſo much againſt.

For, *firſt* of all, though he was never ſo ſenſibly ſmit at the firſt; yet after a little time, the infinite love he bears to that courſe of life which this Viſion came to teſtifie againſt, would put him upon Inventions for the rendring the credit of his very Senſes doubtful and ſuſpected. Many Reaſons would be ſuggeſted to him from his bribed Underſtanding, why he ſhould not in this caſe believe his own Eyes. For why might not all this be a meer deluſion, the effects of a Melancholy diſtempered Fancy, a Buſineſs wholly tranſacted on the Stage of his Imagination.

That he had ſuch an Apparition, and that he was horribly frighted with it, he cannot doubt: But whether this Apparition was really preſented to his outward Senſes, and was not onely the Fiction of his own heated and diſturbed Brain, he thinks he hath reaſon to doubt.

For he remembers, that even in Dreams things have been as livelily repreſented to him, and made as great Impreſſions on him, as the ſame things could have been or done if he had been awake. And he knows very well, that Fancy hath a ſtrange

power over a mans Judgment, even when his Eyes are wide open; especially if the circumstances of being alone, of Melancholy and Pensiveness, and some particular Accidents do concur to the raising of it.

How many People meet with Goblins in their Night-walks, and see Armies fighting in the Air, and assuredly perswade themselves and others that they do so? When as in truth the one is nothing else but Trees; and the other, but Clouds formed into such shapes by the power of their Imagination. How many Persons in Feverish Distempers see plainly Fiends and Devils standing at their Beds-feet, ready to take them away, and hear dreadful Noises? But yet none is so simple as to believe these to be Realities, but onely the Effects of their present Frenzy. And why may not this Bugbear of a Vision, that did at first so fright the Man, be a thing of the same kind, a meer Creature of his own disordered Fancy?

It is certainly not impossible for a Man whose concernment it is, not to believe any thing of this nature, at last to bring himself to such an Opinion.

Especially when he is helped forward by the concurrent Votes of all his jolly Companions, whom he tells the thing to, who, to be sure, will not fail to laugh heartily, and make very merry with

with his Story; and, if it be poſſible, to droll it out of his Head, by perſuading him, that the whole Matter was but the Reſult of Melancholy and a crazed Brain; and that if he ſtill continues to believe it, he is fitter for *Bedlam* than their Company.

But, *ſecondly*, Suppoſing he cannot thus eaſily baffle the Credit of his Senſes; but is forced to believe, that what he ſaw and heard was more than a Fancy or Imagination: Yet that inveterate Principle of Vice within him will put him upon other ways and contrivances for the hindring that Effect which the Viſion ought in reaſon to have upon him. Though he cannot queſtion the Truth of the Matter of Fact; yet it is likely he may queſtion the Force of the Argument drawn from thence for his Conviction.

Here is one pretends to come to him from the Dead; but how ſhall he be certain that he did really come from thence? For any thing he knows, it may be ſome Trick put upon him. Some knaviſh Fellow had a mind to fright him, or ſome bigotted Religioniſt, aſſuming the Perſon of a Ghoſt, thought by this pious Fraud to convert him to his Perſuaſion; as he hath read in Story, ſuch Pranks have been plaid to ſerve a Turn, or promote a good Cauſe. And whereas his Reaſon might tell him, that this could not be ſo, ſee-

ing the Perſon that appeared to him had both the Countenance and the Voice of his Friend: Yet that he would get over; The Impoſture was cunningly carried on, and the Surpriſe and Fright it put him into, did ſo diſorder his Judgment, that he was not able to diſtinguiſh between the True and the Counterfeit.

But ſuppoſing he be convinced, that here was no Juggle in the matter, but what appeared was a true Spirit or a Ghoſt, if there be any ſuch: Yet how ſhall he know that it was the Ghoſt of his Friend? If he was ſure it was he, he would give credit to what he reported, becauſe of the former experience he had had of his Integrity: But this he cannot any way be certain of. For any thing he knows to the contrary, it may be one of thoſe ill-natured Inhabitants of the Air, that are ſo much talked of, that make it their Buſineſs to diſturb the Reſt and Quiet of Mankind; and take a pleaſure in filling their Heads with Fears and Scruples, and drawing them to all kind of Superſtition.

He hath heard and read of ſuch: And there is no Man of any Perſuaſion or Religion, *Jew*, *Turk*, or *Heathen*; nay, all the ſeveral ſorts of Heathens at this day, which are to be found either in the *Eaſt* or the *Weſtern Indies*; and *Chriſtians* too of all Communions: There is none of theſe but have

have Stories to tell of Apparitions and Visions, for the confirmation of their several Doctrines and Tenets. Now that all these Apparitions are to have credit given to them, is absurd; because they contradict one another in their Discoveries. How therefore can he tell whether this particular Apparition that is made to him, ought to be credited or no, as to what it declares concerning Religion, and the State of the other World? In plain *English*, rather than such a Man as we are speaking of, will be prevailed upon to quit his dearly-beloved Lusts and Vices, he will find Excuses and Reasons a great many, why he ought not to believe any thing that is conveyed to him in such a manner as we now suppose.

Especially, if we consider, in the *Third* place, What Advantages he will make for his purpose from that very way that we now think would be most effectual to convert him; that is, *One coming from the Dead.* Here is an Apparition pretends to be sent upon a particular Message to him from the other World, to perswade him to embrace such a Religion, and to change his way of Living; and threatens him with horrible punishments if he doth not: The very unusualness of the thing will put some Apprehensions into him, (especially considering his concernment to find out all the ways that can be, to elude the force of the Argument)

gument) that it is not ſo convincing, doth not carry in it ſo great Evidence as at firſt ſight there ſeemed to appear. For what Imaginable Reaſon can be given, why he ſhould be dealt with in a way ſo different from that that the reſt of Mankind are? The Particularity of the Miracle will give occaſion to him to ſuſpect the truth of what it diſcovers. If his Neighbours and Friends were thus haunted, he might think he had reaſon to be alarmed, and to apprehend ſome danger in that courſe of life he is ſo much diſwaded from: But ſince none in the place where he lives, is thus exerciſed beſides himſelf; he cannot ſatisfie his Reaſon, as to this way of Proceeding with him. If this Means of Conviction was rational and ſtrong, without doubt others would have it afforded to them, and be convinced by it as well as he. But ſince no ſuch thing appears, as the Apparition it ſelf is unaccountable, ſo are the Arguments and Motives it offers, unaccountable alſo. And till he be convinced in the ſame way, and by the ſame Reaſons that other Men are, he will continue as he is.

I repreſent theſe things, not to ſhew the weakneſs or invalidity of ſuch an Argument as we are ſpeaking of, but to ſhew how eaſily thoſe that have eſpouſed Intereſts inconſiſtent with Religion and Chriſtianity may find out Expedients for the avoiding the force of it. But,

But, *Fourthly*, and laſtly, Let all this go for nothing. Let us ſuppoſe the man to be very well ſatisfied in his own mind, both concerning the matter of Fact, and the cogency of the Argument he hath from thence to live after another rate than he hath hitherto done; nay, as often as he thinks of this Viſion, or is asked concerning it, he hath the ſame Senſe, and makes the ſame Judgment of it that he did at firſt; though it be many Years after: I ſay, ſuppoſing all this, yet doth it from hence follow, That ſuch a Man will be effectually brought over to Virtue and Religion, after he hath long purſued a courſe of ſin, and reſiſted the Arguments of the Goſpel? Alas it is very unlikely. How much alarmed ſoever he was at firſt, yet it is a hundred to one (if he be ſuch a Perſon as we ſpeak of) but in time, and by degrees, the impreſſions will wear off, and Nature return to its firſt courſe. It was the newneſs and ſurprizingneſs of the thing, that firſt wrought upon him; but that will not laſt always. After he hath once got over the firſt Tranſports, and is come again to his uſual temper, and to his Buſineſs, and to his Company; the Argument, though it have the ſame force that it had at firſt, yet it grows flat and unaffecting, and will have no more effect upon him than the ſtanding Motives of Chriſtianity formerly had: Notwithſtanding all his firſt Convictions, he will

will live as tamely under the Bondage and Tyranny of his old reigning Lusts (though perhaps not without some checks of Conscience now and then,) as those that never had such kind of means vouchsafed them for their Conversion.

And it must needs be thus; for when all is done, Arguments will still be but Arguments. They can perswade, but they cannot compel. The efficacy of them doth in a great measure depend upon our will and choice, especially where they are to combate with strong Passions and Prepossessions.

Are there not a thousand Persons in our days, that are as fully convinced of the Truth of the Christian Revelation, and the Necessity of a Holy Religious Life in order to the going to Heaven, or avoiding the Pains of Hell, as they would be if one should come to them from the Dead? Nay, more fully, perhaps, than they would have been by the Testimony of such an Apparition had they wanted the Scriptures. And have not the Consciences of these Persons, at several times, by several means, been severely awakened? And have they not at these seasons in the most serious manner imaginable made Vows and Resolutions to live a Holy Christian Life? And yet we see they continue still unreformed, still they are the same sensual, careless, unchristian Livers that ever they were. I

appeal

appeal to the Conſciences of Men, whether this be not true; and why ſhould we think it would fare otherwiſe with us, if God ſhould ſend one from the Dead to reclaim us? That very Miracle would not convince our Underſtandings more than they have been convinced already, and therefore why ſhould we think it would work more upon our Wills?

The ſum of all this Diſcourſe is this. That how prevailing ſoever we may imagine ſuch an experiment, as the Rich man here offers to *Abraham* for the Converſion of his Brethren, would be upon us, yet a ſenſual man, that was unwilling to give up himſelf to the Conduct of Religion, might eaſily find out ways to avoid the force that it ought to have upon his mind; nay, more eaſily perhaps than he hath hitherto reſiſted the Motives of the Goſpel. And therefore we may certainly conclude with *Abraham* in the Text, that they *that hear not* Moſes *and the Prophets*, or to put it into our own Language, They that hear not Chriſt and his Apoſtles, *neither*, in all probability, *would they be perſwaded though one roſe from the dead.*

NOthing now remains, but that I draw two or three Inferences from what hath been ſaid, and ſo Conclude.

In the *first* place, from what I have Diſcourſed upon this Argument, we may diſcover the infinite Wiſdom of God, in the pitching upon that Method he hath done, for the bringing Men to Virtue and Happineſs, namely, by the ſtanding Revelations of *Moſes* and the Prophets, and of Chriſt and his Apoſtles. For we may perceive this Method is every way more accommodated for that End, than if God ſhould be every day working Miracles for the reclaiming particular Perſons.

As it is more ſuitable to the other Methods of God's Providence; to the way that he hath choſen for the Government of the World, (which is by the ſetled ſtanding Laws of Motion, leaving Natural Cauſes to produce their Natural Effects, and not interpoſing his Omnipotency, but upon eſpecial extraordinary Occaſions): So alſo, as we have ſeen, is it much more effectual for the convincing Mens Underſtandings, and the working upon their Wills, than the other Method of Private Miracles and Revelations would be.

We have ſeen how many ways the Force of an Argument drawn from ones appearance from the Dead may be evaded: But now none of theſe Pretences can be made againſt the Evidence of a Publick Revelation, ſo atteſted, and confirmed, and conveyed down to us, as that of Chriſtianity is. And beſides, there are many Arguments to be

drawn

drawn from ſuch a Revelation, to ſhew the Credibility of it, which are altogether wanting to ſuch a Private Miracle as we ſpeak of.

Secondly, We may learn from hence, what little need there is of any new modern Miracles for the confirming to us any Doctrine of Chriſtianity which was long ago, in all the Articles of it, ſo well atteſted by the Illuſtrious Miracles of Chriſt and his Apoſtles.

And more eſpecially we may learn from hence, what little credit is to be given to thoſe Miracles that are wrought or pretended to be wrought for the proof of ſuch Doctrines as are really contrary to that Revelation of our Lord, as it is delivered in the Holy Scriptures.

We are ſure that *Moſes* and the Prophets, *Chriſt* and his Apoſtles, taught nothing but the Truth of God, he having ſo publickly and ſo convincingly ſet his Seal to all their Doctrines. And we are ſure likewiſe that the Scripture contains nothing in it but what was taught by them, and conſequently muſt be the truth of God alſo. And therefore, if any Doctrine or Article of Religion be at any time recommended to our belief, that doth not agree with theſe Holy Writings, or doth contradict them either directly or by plain unavoidable conſequence; we may be equally ſure that that Doctrine cannot be true, nor is to

be received by us, though we are told of never so many Private Miracles that have been wrought for the confirmation of it.

Our Rule in these Cases is, *To the Law and to the Testimony*; To the Publick and Undoubted Oracles of God, in the Old and New Testament. Whatever Doctrine can be proved out of them, we are bound to embrace it without a new Miracle. On the other side, Whatever Doctrine is inconsistent with them, we must reject it, though an *Angel from Heaven*, or *one from the Dead* should come and preach it to us.

Thirdly, From hence we see the Vanity and Unreasonableness of those Men, that not content with the Ordinary Means of Grace, are always wishing for Extraordinaries. There are a great many of us that will be saved by Methods of our own chusing, otherwise we will not be saved at all. As it was in St. *Paul*'s time, the *Jews* they required a *Sign*; the *Greeks*, they were for *Wisdom* and Philosophy; and perhaps a third sort of Men were for another kind of means of Conviction: So it is among us.

Here is one Man would have a particular Miracle wrought for his Conversion. If he could see a Spirit or a Ghost, he would believe there was another World. If God would send an Angel from Heaven to preach to him, he thinks he should become a New Man. Here

Here is another would believe the Goſpel, if every point of it could be demonſtrated by Reaſon, and a clear and plain account be given of all the Myſteries of it: but till that be done, he is of the Religion of the Philoſophers.

Here is another Man waits for Immediate Impulſes and Inſpirations. The ordinary Aſſiſtances of the Spirit that accompany the Word and Sacraments will not do his buſineſs.

But let us not deceive our ſelves. All theſe Imaginations are vain and fooliſh. If God ſhould grant us our ſeveral deſires; and give one of us a *Sign*, another of us a *Demonſtration*, another of us a *powerful Conviction* upon our Minds, from his Holy Spirit, and that in an extraordinary way: Yet it is ſtill very doubtful, whether, for all this, the Buſineſs of our Converſion would be effected.

None was more confident than the Rich man in the Parable, that if to the Teſtimony of *Moſes* and the Prophets, was ſuperadded a new Miracle, his Brethren would certainly be perſuaded: But yet you ſee, our Saviour affirms the direct contrary.

Oh let us all cloſe with the ſtanding Publick Methods which God hath eſtabliſhed in the Church, for the bringing us to Vertue and eternal Happineſs, and not be hankering after new

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and fanciful ways of our own chuſing. Moſt certainly, the Ordinary Means of Grace are ſufficient for the Salvation of all our Souls, and will be effectual to that End, if we be not wanting to our ſelves. And if any Extraordinaries be at any time needful, God without doubt will ſupply us with them alſo.

Fourthly, and laſtly, From what hath been ſaid, we ſee the horrible Guilt and the utter Inexcuſableneſs of thoſe Men, that notwithſtanding the Goſpel-means of Salvation, that have been ſo long afforded them, do ſtill continue Infidels in their Judgment, or Immoral in their Lives.

What will theſe Men be able to ſay for themſelves, when they come to appear before the Judge of the World, at the great Day of Accounts? Will they pretend there was not force enough in the Goſpel-evidence to convince them, or weight enough in its Motives to reclaim them? Ah! their own Hearts will give them the Lie. They can no longer be able to deceive themſelves. There will be no Unbelievers, no ſeared Conſciences, in the other State. They will then be clearly convinced, that God for his part did all that was neceſſary, nay, all that was fit to be done, in order to their Salvation: But they were reſolved to ſhut their Eyes, and harden their Hearts againſt the gracious Means that were tendred them.

Oh,

Oh, how will the Rich man and his five Brethren in Hell riſe up in Judgment againſt theſe Men? For they onely refuſed to hear *Moſes* and the Prophets: But theſe, beſides them, have obſtinately refuſed to hear *Chriſt* and his Apoſtles, who brought abundantly greater Light into the World than the former did.

Much more, How will the poor ignorant *Heathens* riſe up in Judgment againſt them? Who were deſtitute both of *Moſes* and *Chriſt*; and yet, to the ſhame of *Chriſtians* it may be ſpoken, have ſeveral of them lived better Lives than many of us do.

May not we juſtly and ſadly apply that Woe which our Saviour pronounced of *Chorazin* and *Bethſaida*, to Thouſands among us? Woe unto you Unbelievers; Woe unto you, O obſtinate and irreclaimable Sinners; for if the mighty Means of Grace, the mighty Evidence of Truth, had been afforded to *Tyre* and *Sidon*, to *Sodom* and *Gomorrha*, to *Mahometans* and *Pagans*; that have been afforded unto you; *they would long ago have repented in Sackcloth and Aſhes. But I ſay unto you, It ſhall be more tolerable for all theſe in the day of Judgment, than for you.*

God Almighty give us all Grace ſeriouſly to conſider theſe things, that we may by a timely and hearty

hearty closing with his Methods and Designs for our Salvation, prevent the dismal Consequences of Infidelity and a Vicious Life; that so it may not be our Condemnation at the last day, That Light is come into the World, and we have loved Darkness rather than Light.

FINIS.

A SERMON PREACHED Before the QUEEN AT WHITEHALL, On the 11th of *April*, 1690.

By *JOHN SHARP*, D.D. Dean of *Canterbury*, and one of Their Majesties Chaplains.

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QUEEN

WHITEHALL,

On the 11th of April, 1690.

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A

SERMON

Preached before the

QUEEN.

GAL. V. xiii.

Use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh.

ANY one that useth to make reflections upon his own actions, cannot but observe, That one of the great occasions of the sins he is guilty of in the course of his Life, is the too free use of his lawful *Liberty*.

I do not say, that any Man doth commit sin by using his *lawful liberty* (for that would be a kind of contradiction): But I say, the using our *liberty* to the utmost pitch and extent of

that which we call *lawful*, is the occaſion of a great many ſins that would otherwiſe not have been committed.

If one ſhould offer to tempt a Man that hath any ſenſe of Vertue or Religion, to do a thing, that at the firſt ſight appears ſinful or wicked; it would certainly be rejected. Every one that has any regard to God or goodneſs, would ſtart at ſuch a propoſal. But here is our infelicity. A Temptation comes on by degrees. And at the firſt we are ingaged in nothing but what is lawful and honeſt; and accordingly we uſe that *liberty* which *nature* and *religion* allows us; and ſo we proceed on inſenſibly in the uſe of that *liberty*, till at laſt we become uncertain, whether we have not exceeded the bounds of what is *lawful*: And by this means we are often caught. Nay indeed nothing but this could betray well meaning perſons, and ſuch as are vertuouſly diſpoſed, into ſin. *Licitis perimus omnes*, ſaid a devout Man: It is by *lawful things* that we commonly miſcarry.

With great reaſon therefore doth St. *Paul* give this advice in the Text: *Brethren* (ſaith he) *ye have been called unto liberty, only uſe not liberty for an occaſion to the fleſh.*

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There is no doubt but the Apostle writ these words upon occasion of, and with reference to, the great Controversy that was then on foot among Christians, touching the Obligation of the Jewish Law.

Some then thought themselves bound in Conscience to observe all the Precepts of *Moses* his Law. Other Christians thought they were freed by the coming of Christ from all *legal* Observances. The Apostle determines the Case in favour of these latter, and declares, that by the Gospel *they were called unto liberty*, and were free from all the Mosaical Impositions. But yet nevertheless he tells them they ought to be careful in the exercise of that *liberty*; that they *do not use it for an occasion to the flesh*.

That is to say, that this *liberty* to which they were *called*, should not minister to any sin. That they should not so use it, as to be a snare, either to *themselves* or *others*. To *themselves*, by running into licentiousness, and taking *unlawful liberties*. To *others*, either by affrighting the unbelieving Jews from the embracing Christianity, or discouraging those that already believed the Gospel in the profession of it.

This is the strict sense of the Apostles words,

as they come in here in the Text, and as they do relate to that occasion upon which he writ them. But, that sense, with reference to that occasion, is now out of doors among us. Though the general advice that is here given, will eternally be good and useful; nay, and always needful to be insisted on in all Ages of the World.

We have none now *that use their liberty for an occasion to the flesh*, as to the point of the *Judaical Ceremonies*: But we have abundance that do use it so as to other matters. Nay, as I said before, this too free use of our *liberty* in *lawful things*, is one of the great Sources and Fountains from whence most of our irregularities do proceed. And therefore I do not know how I can entertain you more usefully upon this Text, than by endeavouring to give you the best Rules I can, for the reducing the Apostle's Exhortation into practice, as it doth concern us at this day.

But that you may see plainly what I drive at, I will yet state the matter a little more particularly.

Our Case in this World is this. The Laws of *Vertue* and *Religion*, do allow Men all *reasonable liberties* in the gratification of their natu-

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ral Passions and Appetites, and in the use and enjoyment of all the good things of this Life. But all *unreasonable* gratifications, all *excesses* and *immoderate liberties*, are forbidden by *Religion*, and therefore are *sinful* and *criminal*.

If now in all Cases a Man could readily and certainly fix the precise *bounds* and *landmarks* of what is *reasonable* and *moderate*, and what is *unreasonable* and *excessive* in the use of his *liberty*; so as that upon all occasions, and in all emergencies, he could say within his own mind, *Thus far I may lawfully and innocently go in the gratification of such an appetite, or in the enjoyment of such a pleasure*, or the like; *but if I proceed a step further, I become a Transgressor*: I say, if this was the case of a Man in the *use* of his *liberty*, it would be no hard matter for any well-disposed person, to take all that *liberty* that was *moderate* and *lawful*, and to forbear all that which is *excessive* and *unlawful*.

But now this is not always an easy matter to be done. For many Cases happen in which a Man cannot precisely determine where it is that his *lawful liberty* ends, and where it is that it begins to be *extravagant* and *excessive*. So that while a Man is only designing to gratify his desires in lawful instances, he is often car-

ried beyond his bounds, and proceeds to Excess.

This now, I say, is one great occasion of sin to Mankind; and yet there is no avoiding of it, because it is such a one as doth necessarily arise from the nature of things. Thus for instance: It is certainly very lawful for a Man to drink Wine and strong drink not only for his Healths sake, when his Constitution doth require it, but also for Cheerfulness, and the enjoyment of his Friends: But on the other side, *Drunkenness* and *Intemperance* are grievous Crimes, and utterly forbidden by our Religion. Whilst now a Man on one hand hath a desire to take that liberty that is allowed him, and to gratify his natural inclination to *mirth* and *pleasantness*, or to shew *Civility*, he terms it, to his Company: And on the other hand, he has no certain unalterable measures to proceed by, for the stinting himself in this Case; (as surely it is a very hard matter to prescribe or define, either to a Man's self or others, the exact pitch or limits where *Temperance* ends, and *Intemperance* begins): by this means, I say, he is often betrayed into sin. Thinking with himself, that there is a great *latitude* and *compass* in the exercise of *Temperance*

and *Sobriety* (as indeed there is,) and that therefore he may go on some time longer with the Company; the Wine by this means steals upon him, and he is, before he was aware, fallen into the sin of *Intemperance* and *Excess*.

And thus it is, not only as to the *use* of our liberty in things allowed, but as to the performance of our *duty* in things *commanded*. Every Man is sensible, that it is a principal law of our Religion to be *Charitable*, and to give Alms out of our substance. But now it is not so easy a matter for any Man to define, and set out the *quantum*, or the precise proportion of Alms, which every one is bound to give, so as to be able to pronounce, that if a Man give so much, he performs his duty, and is a *Charitable* Man, for one in his Circumstances; but if he gives less than that, he is *Covetous* and *Uncharitable*. Now, I say, because this duty of *Charity* is thus indefinitely left, and there is such an *affinity* and *undistinguishableness* between the least measures of *Charity*, and the sin of being *uncharitable*; Men do from hence often take occasion to fall short in the performance of it. And as in the former instance I gave about *drinking*, they are apt to take more

liberty than is *allowed* them; so in this they are apt to do less than is *commanded* them. For if they do but give something to the poor out of their yearly Income, they think they give enough to satisfy the Command of *Charity*; and so they make no Conscience of *saving* and *hoarding* without end or without measure.

There are a hundred more instances beside these two that I have named, wherein there is such a *latitude* left to our practices, and the difference between *lawful* and *unlawful*: and *sin* lies in so small a compass, that it is hard to separate and distinguish them, unless a Man be both very wise and very honest.

We have not any Law of God which defines how often we are to *pray*; Or wherein our duty to *fast*; Or to what degree we may be *angry*; Or how we are to govern our selves as to the quantity or kinds of our *meat* and *drink*; Or how far we may comply with the *Customs* of the World; Or how splendid we may be in our *apparel* and *equippage*; Or what *games* and *recreations* may be used, and how often; Or what Rules we are to go by in *buying* and *selling*, and our other dealings with Men; Or how far we may seek our own, when our right cannot be obtained without prejudice to our Neighbour.

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In these, I say, and abundance of other Cases, we have no express particular Laws of God to steer and measure our actions by; nor indeed is it possible we should have: Because what is fit and reasonable to be done in these Cases, admits of so great a difference from the infinite variety of the circumstances of particular Men.

What now must we do in these Cases? How must we order our selves, that we may perform our duty, and keep out of sin?

Why in answer to this I say, We have only general rules to direct us in these matters; and those rules we are to apply to our own particular cases.

In this *latitude* that things are left in, we are to use our *liberty* as carefully and as prudently as is possible; taking our measures from the principles of *reason*, and the general rules of the *Gospel*. Now what those general rules and measures are, it is my business at this time to treat of.

And *three* things I have here to propose for the *use* of our *liberty*, which will, I think, be a sufficient direction to us in all cases of this nature; and which if we do carefully observe, we shall never *use our liberty for an occasion to the Flesh*;

Flesh; but we shall both come up to what is our duty, and shall likewise avoid all those sins which Mankind are so frequently betrayed into, through the too great affinity that there is between *Vertue* and *Vice*, and the indiscreet exercise of their *liberty* upon occasion thereof.

And the *first* thing I would possess you all with, and which indeed, as it is the most general, so it is the best advice that can be given in this matter, is this: *That we would endeavour to be heartily honest and serious in the business of Religion*: That we would sincerely devote our selves to the service of God: That we would purify our minds as much as may be from all sensual and selfish Principles, and in all our actions and pursuits, have more respect to the doing our duty, and the approving our selves to our great Lord and Master, than to any other consideration.

This is that which St. *Paul* so often exhorts us to. *Whether* (saith he) *you eat or drink, or whatever ye do, do all to the glory of God.* And again, *Whatever ye do, do it heartily as unto the Lord, knowing that of the Lord you shall receive the reward of the inheritance.*

If we could once get our selves possessed of this *Probity*, this *Purity* of mind and heart, it would

would better instruct us in the *use* of our *liberty*, and teach us to distinguish between *good* and *evil*, what is fit to be done, and what ought not to be done, in all cases and emergencies we are concerned in; than all the dry Rules of *casuistical* learning, be they never so carefully and accurately laid down.

When a Man is once arrived to that holy temper of mind, that he heartily loves God and his Neighbour, and has such a lively sense of the truth and the excellency of Christ's Religion, that he is resolved, that that shall influence and govern the whole course of his life, and that he will do all his actions, as much as he can, for the honour of our Lord, and the advancement of his service in the World: There can hardly any particular case occur to such a Man in which he will not have rules and measures ready at hand to steer and direct him in his proceedings.

Nay this general Principle alone *of doing all his actions to the glory of God*, that is to say, to the honour of his Religion, and the edification of his Neighbour: I say this alone will afford him sufficient light and direction for the government of his actions in all Contingencies. Because there is no action he can be ingaged

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in, but it is at the first sight discernable, whether the doing of it, or the not doing of it, doth more tend to the honour of his Religion, or the good of others.

That which makes the conduct of a Man's self in this World, so nice and difficult a matter, and has given occasion to the discussion of so many cases of Conscience about the *lawfulness* or *unlawfulness* of Actions, is this; That Men are not throughly *honest*, but halt between God and the World. They have a great mind to *serve* their *pleasures* and their *ambition*, and their secular ends; and yet to *serve God* too, and this puts them upon *tampering* and trying to reconcile these interests together. Whence it comes to pass, that the usual questions that arise about their actions, are not, what is best to be done, or what is most agreeable to their duty in this or the other case? But, how far they may go in the gratification of such an appetite or passion, without transgressing the Laws of God? How far they may satisfy their *covetous* desires, without being *unjust*? Whether they may use such *arts* or *tricks*, in getting or saving, without being *knavish*? How far they may *drink*, and not be *drunk*? How far they may gratify their humour

mour of *decking* and *adorning* themselves, and yet do no unlawful thing? How far they may indulge *wantonness*, and yet be *chast*?

Now, as I said before, such Questions as these are not easy to be resolved (nor indeed is the Gospel of Christ so contrived, as if it had taken much care whether they were resolved or no.) But they are really Cases and Problems that require both Judgment and Learning, and likewise the consideration of abundance of particular circumstances, to have a good account given of them.

But now the Man that doth intirely give up himself to the conduct of the Spirit, and proposeth nothing to himself in all his actions but the pure Glory of God: Such a Man having none of these Worldly sensual designs to serve in his actions, can rarely be supposed to have any of these questions to put to himself. And consequently he can never be at a loss or uncertainty, how he is to act for want of a resolution of them, much less can he be in danger of transgressing the bounds that God hath fixed to his Actions.

All the point that such a one hath to consider in any action is, whether will his doing or not doing such an action better serve the ends

of Religion? Which will tend most to his own spiritual benefit, and the profit of his Neighbour, to pursue this design, or to let it alone? Whether will be more conducive to the honour of his Lord, to gratify such an appetite, or to deny it satisfaction?

This I say is the only question that such a Man has to put to himself, and there is no difficulty in giving an answer to it. For there is scarce any case to be put concerning an action, but it is very obvious, without an instructer, to find out which side of the case, if it be chosen, will most minister to the ends of *Vertue*, and *Religion* and *Charity*. Or if it be not obvious, then it is very certain, the Man needs not much deliberate about it, but may chuse either side indifferently.

It is a very hard matter oftentimes to determine concerning the *necessity* and *obligation* of Actions; that is, whether a Man be *bound* to do them or no. It is likewise often a hard matter to determine concerning the *lawfulness* of Actions, whether a Man *may* do them or no. But it is a very easy matter in most cases to determine, concerning the *expedience* of Actions; that is to say, whether it be *best* and *fittest* for a Man to do them or no. Now this last,

laſt, I ſay, is the point that a throughly good Man will conſider and ſteer himſelf by in all his Actions.

Thus for inſtance, It may perhaps bear a diſpute, Whether a Man be preciſely bound by God's Law, to *pray* ſolemnly twice a day, ſo as that he ſins if he do not: But it will bear no diſpute, that it is much better, and more acceptable to God, and beneficial to our ſelves, to pray at leaſt thus often, than to pray ſeldomer. And therefore ſuch a perſon as I am ſpeaking of, will upon this conſideration put it in practice (nay and *pray* oftner too as he has occaſion) without concerning himſelf whether he be ſtrictly bound ſo to do or no.

It may bear a diſpute among ſome Perſons, whether *painting* the *Face* be not allowable to Chriſtian Women. But it can bear no diſpute among any, that it is more agreeable to the Sobriety, and Modeſty and Chaſtity, of a Diſciple of Jeſus Chriſt, and better ſerves the ends of Religion to forbear all ſuch ſuſpicious Ornaments. (There being rarely any good end to be ſerved by them, but abundance of evil often ariſing from them.) Now this conſideration alone is enough to ſet the heart of every ſerious Chriſtian againſt thoſe practices, and

to make them wholly to refrain them.

Thus again, it is argued both ways about *Play* or *Gaming*, whether it be lawful or no; (especially when sums of money are played for; and the thing becomes rather an *avaritious* Contention, than a *Recreation* and *Divertisement*) some believing that it is innocent; others that it is a grievous sin. But there is no Man, even of those that use it most, but will readily acknowledge, that it exposeth a Man to great and dangerous *Temptations* of sundry kinds; that it is the occasion of abundance of *sin*, and abundance of *mischief*; and that it seldom fails to produce intolerable consequences, both as to Mens *Souls*, and *Estates*, and *Families*. Now to a Man that loves God, and hath a tender sense of his duty, this is enough in all Conscience to deter him for ever from the practice of *Gaming*, though it be not made to appear to him, that it is *expressly* and *explicitly* forbid by any Law of *Jesus Christ*.

So that you see, that in those points where there are disputes on both sides, when the consideration is concerning the *obligation*, or the *lawfulness* of an action; there is no difficulty, no dispute at all, when the consideration is only concerning what is *best* and most *fitting*

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to be done; concerning what is most agreeable to our duty, and most conducive to the honour of God and Religion, as to that action. That is evident enough in all Cases; nor is any Man at a loss for finding it out. And that is the Principle which I say every sincere lover of God, governs himself by; and which I would have us all to propose to our selves for the rule of our actions, in order to the securing us from those *snares* and *stumbling-blocks*, to which the *affinity* between *Vertue* and *Vice*, *lawful* and *unlawful*, will otherwise expose us.

Let us not stand upon points with God Almighty, as if so much was his, and so much was our own; as if we were to share our selves between his Service, and our own Pleasures and Profits, and the like; and were resolved not to pay him any more respect or love, than what some expres letter of his Law doth exact at our hands. But let us so entirely devote our selves to his Service, as to do not only all those things which we are strictly bound to do, or else we are transgressors; but all those things that are acceptable to him, all those things that are praise-worthy, and tend to the perfection of our nature, and the reputation of Christ's Religion.

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Let us make it the end of our actions, not to seek our selves, but his glory; every day to grow better and better, and in every Occurrence to consider, not what may *lawfully* be done, but what is most *becoming* a *Disciple* of *Jesus Christ* to do. In a word, what ever is *best* in any action; what ever most serves the ends of *piety*; what ever tends most to the credit of our Religion, and the benefit of others, let us consider that, and act accordingly.

And thus I am sure to design and act, is most suitable to the nature and genius of our Christian Religion; nay, indeed, it is the principal Law and Commandment of it.

The design of Christianity is not to adjust the precise bounds of *Vertue* and *Vice*, *lawful* and *unlawful*, which is that that a great many among us so greedily hanker after. For the best that could have come from such a design, had been only this, that Men by this means might have been fairly instructed, how they might have avoided the being *bad*; though they never became very *good*. But the design of Christianity, is to make Men as *good* as they can possibly be; as *devout*, as *humble*, as *charitable*, as *temperate*, as *contented*, as *heavenly-minded*, as their natures will allow of in this World.

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And for the producing this effect, the exact distinguishing the *limits* of the several *Vertues*, and their opposite *Vices*, signifies very little.

The Laws of our great Master are not like the *Civil*, *Municipal* Laws of Kingdoms, which are therefore wonderfully nice and critical, and particular in setting bounds to the practices of Men, because they only look at *overt actions*; so that if a Man do but keep his *actions* within the compass of the *letter* of the Law, he may be accounted a good Subject, and is no way obnoxious to the *penalties* which the Law threatens.

If our Religion had been of this strain, we should without doubt have had a World of particular Laws and Precepts, and directions about our actions, in all emergent Cases, more than we now have: And we might as easily have known from the *Bible*, what was *forbidden unlawful anger*, what was *excessive drinking*, what was *pride* and *luxury* in *Apparel*, and the like; as we now know by the *Statute-Book*, what is *Burglary*, or *Murder*, or *Treason*. But there was no need of these particularities in the institution of Christ Jesus. His Religion was to be a Spiritual thing: And the design of it was not to make us *chast*, or *temperate*, or *humble*, or *charitable*,

charitable, in such a degree; but to make us as *chaste* and *temperate*, as *humble* and *charitable*, as *pure* and *holy* in all our Conversation, as we possibly can be.

This I say was the design of Christ's Religion. It was to be the Highest *Philosophy* that was ever taught to Mankind. It was to make us the most excellent and perfect Creatures, as to *purity* of *mind* and *heart*, that humane nature is capable of. And therefore it hath not been so accurate and particular in prescribing bounds to our *outward actions*, because it was abundantly enough for the securing them, to oblige us to the highest degree of *inward purity*.

And this it hath done above all the Laws and Religions in the World. It teacheth us to abhor every thing that is evil or impure in all the *kinds* of it, in all the *degrees* of it, and in all the *tendencies* towards it; And to lay out our selves in the pursuit of every thing that is *honest*, that is *lovely*, that is *praise-worthy*, and of *good report* among Men.

If this now be the design of our Religion, and these be the Laws of it, I leave it to you to judge of these two things. *First*, Whether it doth not highly concern all of us that profess this holy Religion, to endeavour, in all

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our Converſation, to be as holy and as vertuous as we can, and to do as much good as we can; and not to content our ſelves with ſuch a degree of *honeſty* and *vertue*, as is juſt ſufficient to the rendering us *not vicious*. And then *ſecondly*, Whether, if we do thus endeavour, we can eaſily be at a loſs in diſtinguiſhing between *good* and *evil*, *duty* and *ſin*, in any inſtance; And conſequently, Whether we can be much in danger of ill *uſing* our *liberty*, and ſo tranſgreſſing upon that account.

I have been longer upon this firſt head than I intended, but I ſhall make amends for it, by diſpatching the two following, in ſo much the fewer words. And indeed after ſo large an account as I have given of the general Rule, there is leſs need of dwelling upon particular ones.

II. In the *ſecond* place, In order to the *right uſe of our liberty*, and ſo ſecuring our ſelves from falling into ſin, through miſtaking the meaſures of *good* and *evil*; This will be a good rule to propoſe to our ſelves, namely, *That in matters of* Duty, *we ſhould rather do too much than too little*: *But in matters of* Indifferency, *we ſhould rather take too little of our liberty than too much.*

First, As to matters of *Duty* my meaning is this: That where the Laws of God have generally and indefinitely commanded a thing, but have not ſet down rules about the particular meaſures and proportions of it, in that caſe it is adviſable rather to do more than we are perhaps preciſely bound to do, that ſo we may be ſure we have performed our duty; than by being ſcanty in our obedience, to run the hazard of falling ſhort of our duty.

Thus for inſtance, Our Lord in the New Teſtament, hath often and ſolemnly commanded us to *pray*. But neither he nor his Apoſtles, have any where told us how *often* we are to *pray*; only they have bid us pray frequently. In this Caſe now a Man that makes a Conſcience of performing his duty, will take all occaſions and opportunities of lifting up holy hands, and devout affections to his heavenly Father: However, he will not fail, at leaſt *once* every time he riſeth, and *once* every time he goes to reſt, to offer up a *ſolemn* Sacrifice of *Prayer* and *Praiſe*. Leſs than this, I ſay, he muſt not do, for fear he break the Commandment of praying *frequently*, praying *continually*. But more than this it will become him to do, in order to the giving himſelf ſatisfaction,

tisfaction, that he hath fully performed it.

Thus again, *To give alms to the poor*, is an indispensable Duty of our Religion. But what proportion of our substance we are to give away in *Alms* and Charity, is no where set down; but is wholly left to our *discretion*. Now in this case, it is certainly much more advisable to give *liberally*, and *largely*, and *plentifully*; even as much as our condition in this World, and the necessities of our Families can allow: though by so doing, we should prove to have given in greater abundance than we were strictly obliged to: Than by giving *stingily* and *pinchingly*, now and then a little *pocket money* or so, to run the hazard of being Transgressors of the Commandment, and having our Portion among the *covetous* and *unmerciful*.

There is no *damage* comes to a Man by doing the former; but on the contrary, a great deal of *good*. For God never fails *bounteously* to reward the *bountiful* hand. But there is both *damage* and infinite *danger* in the latter. And thus we are to practise in all other Duties.

Only this caution we must take along with us: That we are always so to proportion the measures of every single duty, as to render it

consistent with the performance of the other duties of our lives.

As for instance, we must not spend so much time in *Prayer*, as to hinder the pursuit of our *Callings*, and necessary business. We must so *give Alms*, as yet to leave our selves enough to pay every one their own, and to make a competent provision for our Families. But let us but take care to secure this, and then we cannot easily exceed in the measures of any duty. The more we *pray*, and the more we *give Alms*, still the better. And so in all other instances of duty.

But now in the *second* place, the quite contrary to this are we to practise in matters of *liberty*. There the rule is, rather to take *less* than is allowed us, than to take *all*. Rather to abridge our selves of our lawful *liberties*, than by doing all that we may lawfully do, indanger our falling into sin.

There is no harm at all in departing from our Rights and Privileges which God hath indulged us: But there is a great harm in extending them beyond their bounds. There is no evil in not gratifying our desires and appetites in all the things they crave, which are allowable, and which we are permitted to gra-

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tify them in? But there is an infinite evil in gratifying them in unlawful forbidden instances. And therefore every wise and good Man will be sure to keep on the safe side; and to prevent the danger of doing more than he should do, he will not always do all that he may do.

The truth is, that Man that makes no scruple of *using* his *liberty* to the utmost stretch and extent of it upon all occasions, and regards nothing more in his actions, than just that he do not fall into some direct sin: That Man cannot always be innocent, but will be drawn into a hundred irregularities and miscarriages.

Thus for Example, he that useth himself to *eat* or to *drink* to the utmost pitch that can be said to be within the limits of *Temperance*, it is impossible but such a one will now and then be unavoidably overtaken in the sin of *Gluttony* or *Drunkenness*.

He that will use all the *liberties* that the Law allows him, for the making *advantages* to himself in his *Trade*, or his dealings with other Men: Such a one will not be able to avoid the just imputation of being in many instances an *Oppressor*, or a *hard Conscienced* Man.

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The ſafeſt way therefore if we mean to preſerve our Vertue amidſt the multitude of ſnares and Temptations that we meet with in the World, is to ſet bounds even to our *lawful liberties*; to keep our actions within ſuch a compaſs, as not to come even near the *Confines* of *Vice* and *Sin*.

Though it is but a *point*, and that often an undiſcernable one, that diſtinguiſheth between what is *lawful*, and what is *unlawful*. Yet there is a great *latitude* in what is *lawful*. That is, if I gratify my Appetites but a little, I do that which is *lawful*; and if I gratify them more, I may do that which is *lawful* likewiſe. But he ſhews the moſt honeſt and vertuous Mind, that in his actions takes but a little of this *Latitude*, and by that means keeps himſelf at a good diſtance from that which is *vitious* and *criminal*.

III. But *thirdly* and laſtly, To what degree ſoever we may think fit to make uſe of our liberty; yet at all times, *Aſſoon as we begin to doubt or fear we have gone as far as we lawfully can go; it is then high time to break off, and to proceed no further*. This is the laſt Rule I have to offer upon this occaſion. And thus alſo, wherever we have a juſt ground of *ſuſpicion* or *doubt*, whether

whether a thing be *lawful* or no; this *doubt* or *suspicion*, is of it self reason enough to make us forbear that thing. Unless indeed there be a *Necessity*, or a great *Charity* to be served by the doing of it, which may in reason over-balance the *suspicion* of its lawfulness.

Thus in matters of *Recreation*. If we have the least doubt, whether this or the other *Pleasure* or *Divertisement* be *innocent* and *lawful*; why, that is Argument enough, without more ado, to make us *forbear* it; though perhaps we see others use it without scruple.

Thus in matters of *Temperance*, when we first begin to suspect that we have *drunk* as much as is convenient for us; Let us by all means leave off, and break from the Company.

Thus in matters of *Sobriety*, when we have reason to doubt, that we are come up to the full bounds of the Christian *gravity* and *modesty*; and that any degree more of *pomp* or *bravery* in our *garb*, or in our *attendance*, or in our *Equipage*, will relish of Pride, or Vanity, or Affectation; It is high time rather to abate something of our *sumptuousness* in these things, than to proceed any further.

And thus lastly in matters of *Equity* and *Justice*, when we first begin to have a *suspicion*, that such

such a practice is an *indirect* or *knavish* trick, or that we are too *severe* and *hard* upon a Man, upon whom we have got an advantage: Why this *suspicion* alone is enough in reason to check us in our *exercise*, and to put us upon more fair and moderate courses.

This is a Rule that will for ever be fit for us to practise; for it is grounded upon Eternal Reason. Indeed it is as old as *Morality*. *Quod dubitas ne feceris.* Do nothing that you doubt of, is a Maxim that obtain'd among the Heathens as well as among us Christians.

I dare not indeed say, that this Rule holds universally, in all Cases. For Cases do sometimes happen, wherein it will be advisable for a Man to act even against his doubts. But in such matters as I am now speaking of, matters wherein a Man is at perfect liberty to act or not to act: In all such Cases, it will always, without exception, be a true, and a safe, and a wise Rule. And I am sure, if Men would seriously charge themselves with the practice of it, they would hereby prevent a multitude of Sins and Transgressions, with which they usually *inflame* their *Accounts* against the Day of Judgment.

And

And thus much of the *Rules* I had to propose, as to the *use of our Liberty*, in such cases where a Man is at a loss in finding out the measures and bounds of *duty* and *sin*, and upon that account is in danger of Transgressing. I have only *two* things more to add upon this Argument, by way of *Application*, and I have done. The one as a *Caution* to prevent the misapplying these Rules; the other as an *encouragement* to put them in practice.

That which I have to say by way of *caution* is this: That what I have been now recommending, especially under the two last heads, is not intended to be a rule or direction to any *Hypochondriack*, or Melancholy Persons, or such as are apt to be *over-scrupulous* about their actions. For indeed to such persons it is the worst advice that can be given.

For they are apt to doubt and boggle at every thing, be it never so innocent and free from blame. They dare not eat a hearty meal for fear of being *Intemperate*. And for fear of not being *devout* enough, they exhaust their Spirits, and spoil their health, through the continual *intention* of their minds to serious things.

Now Persons that are of this temper, are rather to be encouraged to take more *liberties*

than they do, than to abate any that they make use of.

But their case is of another consideration, and foreign to my present purpose; and therefore I here say no more about it. It being sufficient to have given this intimation to such people, that they do not make an ill use of any thing that I have now represented; for assuredly, what hath been now said, doth not much concern them.

2. The other thing I have to say, and that by way of *Encouragement*, is this: I doubt not but some will be apt to think, that the Rules I have now given about the *exercise of our liberty*, are much too strict and severe; and that if they must be tied up to such measures, then farewel all the *joy* and *pleasure*, and *comfort* of their lives. But to such People I would crave leave to say, that they have very wrong notions of this matter.

The using of their *liberty* in such a manner as I have been recommending, would not rob them of one true *pleasure* or *comfort* that this World affords. So far from that, that I am very sure, whoever frames his life according to these measures, shall live a hundred times a happier Life, and shall enjoy the World and

all

all the *pleasures* and *advantages* of it, much more to his own content and satisfaction, than if he put no check to the craving of his Appetites, but always indulged and gratified them in every thing, and as much as they desired.

Assure your selves, Vertue and Religion will never hinder you from enjoying any pleasure or satisfaction that is natural. On the contrary there is great reason to believe, that the practice thereof will extreamly heighten and advance the satisfactions you can receive from your worldly Enjoyments. I doubt not in the least, but a soberly, pious and vertuous Man, and that hath a regard to God in all his actions, even the very pleasures and comforts of this Life are more gratifying and affecting, than to any sensual or wicked Man. For such a one, as he is more capable of enjoying them, so do they come to him likewise without the mixtures of those uneasy, troublesome, bitter reflections, that other Men feel in the very best of their Enjoyments.

Let no Man therefore apprehend any loss of his pleasures by entirely devoting himself to God's Service, and *using his liberty* in that careful way I have been recommending. Let him not think that he shall hereby be too much

straitned and *confined*. For certainly this is the true means, not only to keep him for ever from being a Slave to any thing, but also mightily to improve and encrease his *liberty*.

For by thus exercising himself, all the powers of his Soul will be vastly inlarged, and he will hereby attain both *leisure* and *will* to employ all his rational Faculties about the best and the noblest objects in the World, which will yield him the greatest pleasure that is to be had on this side Heaven. Whereas if he had given up himself to be govern'd by any of his sensual Appetites, he had been a *poor, narrow confined* Creature indeed; not capable of any greater satisfactions or pleasures, than what the Brutes do enjoy as well as himself, but with less uneasiness, and fewer disturbances.

It is true indeed, a sensual Man hath no notion of this kind of pleasures, no more than a *Beast* hath of the pleasures of a *Man*. And therefore it is no wonder that such Men entertain all talk about them as little better than meer *Cant* and *Jargon*. But I seriously appeal to all Men that have ever made any trials in the way of Religion and Vertue, whether the Contentments and satisfactions they have received

ceived from the rational use of their *liberty*, and the thoughts and reflections that hereby they do approve themselves to God; and live in hopes of his Favour, and have a fair prospect of a glorious Immortal State in another World: I say, whether they do not find the pleasures and contentments that arise from hence, to be infinitely more solid, and substantial, and durable, than any of those that they receive from the gratification of their sensual Appetites in a vitious unreasonable manner.

Oh therefore, Let none of us make any scruple of devoting our selves entirely, and without reserve, to God Almighty's Service. Let none of us be afraid to put reasonable restraints upon our Passions and Appetites. Assuredly the thus *using our liberty*, is the certain way to preserve and encrease it, and with it, the pleasure and comfort of our Lives; and not only so, but to render us Everlastingly Happy and Blessed in the other World. Which that we may all be, *God of his infinite mercy grant*, &c.

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Paul Jodrell, Cl. Dom. Com.

A SERMON PREACHED

Before the Honourable

House of Commons,

AT

St *Margaret's Westminster,*

On *Wednesday* the 21th of *May*, 1690.

Being the day of the

MONTHLY-FAST.

By *JOHN SHARP*, D.D. Dean of *Canterbury*, and one of Their Majesties Chaplains.

The Second Edition.

LONDON,
Printed for *Walter Kettilby*, at the *Bishop's Head* in St. *Paul's* Church-Yard, 1690.

A

SERMON

PREACHED

Before the Honourable

House of COMMONS,

AT

St Margaret's Weſtminſter,

On Wednesday the [illegible] of May, 1695.

Being the day of the

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BIBLIOTHECA BODLEIANA

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A SERMON

Preached before the Honourable

House of Commons.

Deut. V. xxix.

O that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my Commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their Children for ever.

These are the words of God to *Moses* concerning the Children of *Israel*. And two things may be gathered from them.

I. His serious desire of their Happiness.

II. The means whereby that Happiness is to be attained.

The first of these is imported in that so-

lemn *wish* into which the Text is framed: *O that there were such an heart in them, &c. that it might be well with them, and with their Children for ever.*

The second is imported in the way of connecting the former part of the wish with that which follows: *O that there were such an heart in them* — what then? *that they would fear me, and keep all my Commandments always*, and why so? It follows, *That it might be well with them, and with their Children for ever.* Which plainly implies, That the way to have things well with them, and with their Children, is to fear God, and keep all his Commandments always.

I have but one thing more to observe concerning the Text, and that is this: That the wish or desire that God here expresses of *Israel's Vertue* and *Happiness*, doth not so much relate to the *Israelites*, considered *singly*, and as *particular* Persons, (though it cannot be denied, but it doth extend to them, even under that notion) but it chiefly relates to the Children of *Israel* considered *collectively*, that is to say, under the notion of a *People* or *Nation*. God here expresses his care of the whole Nation, and seriously wishes they may be a happy

People,

People, they and their Children after them.

Two points then we have from this Text very proper to be insisted on upon this occasion, which therefore I shall make the Heads of my following Discourse.

First, *That God is seriously concerned for the good and happiness of Nations and Kingdoms, as well as that of particular Persons; and more especially of those Nations that profess his true Religion.*

Secondly, *That the Happiness and Prosperity of Nations is to be attained the same way that any particular Man's happiness is, that is to say, by fearing God, and keeping his Commandments.*

I. I begin with the first, *That God is seriously concerned for the good and happiness of Nations and Kingdoms, as well as that of particular Persons; and more especially of those Nations that profess his true Religion.*

I do not think this is much doubted of by any Christian; and therefore I need not insist on a laborious proof of it.

That God who doth not overlook the meanest and the most inconsiderable Creatures that he hath made; but so far concerns himself in taking care of them, and providing for them, that not so much as a Sparrow (if we may believe our Saviour) *doth fall to the ground without*

his

his will: Can it be imagined, that he is not more concerned for the happineſs and well-being of the nobleſt part of the viſible Creation, *Mankind* who bear his own Image, and whom he looks upon as his own Children? Certainly he is.

And that God whoſe Care and Providence doth ſo particularly extend to every individual Man, that (as the ſame our Lord Jeſus ſpeaks) *the very hairs of our head are numbered by him*. Can it be imagined, that he doth not ſtill take more care of the greater Bodies and Combinations of Men, ſuch as Nations and Kingdoms, which are ſo many ways more conſiderable than ſingle Men, and in whoſe Fortunes the good or ill of particular Perſons is ſo wholly bound up? Certainly he doth.

And laſtly, That God who is the Author, the Preſerver, the Protector of all publick Societies, *by whom Kings Reign, and Magiſtrates decree Juſtice*: Can it be imagined that he hath not ſtill a more particular regard to thoſe Nations that he hath been pleaſed to call by his own Name, and hath choſen for his own People (ſuch as were the *Iſraelites* in my Text, of old; and ſuch are all thoſe Peoples and Nations now that do profeſs his true Religion)? Certainly he hath.

Thus

Thus natural reason will teach us to argue. And that it is a right way of arguing, is confirmed to us by our Saviour and St. *Paul*, both of which we find reasoning after this manner. Matt. 6. 26, 30. 1 Cor. 9. 9.

To quote to you all that the Scripture saith upon this Argument, would be endless. One of the great designs of God's word, is to possess us with a hearty Belief, that God, as he is the Creator, so is he also the Governour of the World. And that his Providence extends to all the things and Persons in it. And that the constant rule and measure of that Providence, is no other than the good of the World, and the good of every Person in it, so far as his private good is consistent with the publick. And that therefore as God designs all good to every particular Man, so doth he more especially design the good of Nations and Kingdoms in all his dispensations of Providence to them. Nor is there any thing happens in any Nation or Kingdom but with his approbation. E'en the severest visitations that come upon Mankind are from him. *There is no evil happens to a City, but the Lord hath done it.* Though yet *Judgment is his strange work.* And *Mercy and loving kindness is the thing wherein he delights. He doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the Children of Men.* But Amos 3. 6. Is. 28. 21. Mic. 7. 18. Lam. 3. 33.

ſometimes it is neceſſary that Nations ſhould be ſcourged; yet even, that is, for the grea-
Iſ. 26. 9. ter good of Mankind. *That* thus *when God's Judgments are in the Earth, the Inhabitants of the World may learn righteouſneſs.*

But then as for his own People, thoſe upon whom his name is called, thoſe that are in Covenant with him, and profeſs his true Religion; for them upon all occaſions he declares ſo great a tenderneſs and concernment; that there is hardly any figure of ſpeech that the moſt ſenſible Man can make uſe of, for the expreſſing his moſt paſſionate love to his deareſt Friend or Relation, though it be his Wife or his Children, but the very ſame figures are made uſe of by the Holy inſpired Writers to ſet out to us the kindneſs and concernment that God hath for his own People. He is their *God*, their *King*, their *Shepherd*, their *Father*, their *Husband*. They are his *choſen ones*. His *delight*, his *peculiar Treaſure*. *He rejoiceth over them to do them good. His bowels earn, his heart is turned within him, his repentings are kindled together*, when through their miſcarriages he is forced to paſs any ſevere Sentence upon them. All this is the language of God in Scripture, when he ſpeaks of his People, and therefore we cannot doubt

of

of his sincere affection to them, and particular care of them.

All the doubt is, whether these expressions ought to be applied to any other people than the Jews, with respect to whom the Scripture useth them. But we that believe the Gospel, need not make much doubt of it. For it is certain, the reason of all these expressions of kindness to the Jews more than to other Nations, was founded in this; That they were the People whom God had chosen to plant his Church among. They were the People where his Religion was owned. But now it is evident to all Christians, that after our Saviour came into the World, and Preached his Gospel to all Nations, the Jews, as a *Nation*, ceased to be God's Church, or peculiar People; and from that time all those Nations that embraced Christ's Religion, came into their place, and were from thence forward to be as dear to God, and as much his *Care* and his *Treasure*, as ever the Jews were. And, upon that account, we of this Nation, may, with as much reason, apply the expressions of Scripture to our selves, which declare God's kindness and concernment for his People, as ever the Jews did.

Especially considering that God has owned

us of this Nation for his People, in as remarkable a manner as any Nation in Christendom. As appears not only from that glorious light of the Gospel, which he has for many years blessed us with, above any other people perhaps in the Christian World: But also from the wonderful Providences, by which he has from time to time preserved our Church, and with it the true Religion among us, notwithstanding the various attempts of our Enemies to subvert it. O may these Mercies of God to our Nation never be forgotten, and may we always remember them with that due thankfulness they call for at our hands.

And thus much of our first Head. I beg leave to draw a practical Inference or two from what hath been said, before I proceed to the other.

First, Since it appears, that God sits at the Helm, and steers and manages all the affairs of Mankind; and that publick Societies are more especially the objects of his Care and Providence: Methinks this Consideration should be a good Antidote against all those troublesome Fears and Sollicitude, we are apt to disturb our selves with, about the success of publick matters.

If

If indeed all things went in the World by Chance or Fate, and there was no God that did superintend humane affairs; I should think it very natural for Men to be extreamly concerned at every piece of ill news they heard. It might be allowed them to break their sleep in the night, and to complain dismally in the day, of the sad times that were coming upon us. But since we are certain, as much as we are certain that there is a God, and as much as we are certain that the Scripture is true; that all our affairs, our publick as well as our private affairs; the affairs both in Church and State, are entirely in God Almighty's disposal, and that *He* doth really manage and order all things among us; and likewise so manageth them, that all shall at last turn to the good of his People, and to the good of every honest Man: I say, since we are, or may be satisfied, that our Business is in so good hands, I must confess I do not see what reason people have, to give themselves so much trouble and uneasiness, about things that may, or may not come.

Thus far indeed, it is fit that every one should be concerned; nay it is fit that every one should charge his Conscience with it:

Namely,

Namely to do his duty to the publick in his place and ſtation; to contribute all that is in his power towards the procuring and promoting the common Happineſs; and to endeavour all that in him lies, towards the averting thoſe Judgments we have reaſon to fear. But when a Man hath done this, to what purpoſe is it for him to trouble himſelf any further? I ſhould think he had better follow our Saviour's advice, which, when all things be conſidered, will be found Eternally Prudent and Reaſonable: *Take no thought for to morrow: let the morrow take care for the things of it ſelf: ſufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.* Mat. 6. 34.

Secondly, This Doctrine ought to teach us this farther Leſſon; to depend altogether upon God Almighty, and upon him only, for the good ſucceſs of our Affairs, either in Church or State, whenever they are in a doubtful or dangerous condition. For *though many are the devices in the hearts of men; nevertheleſs the counſel of the Lord that ſhall ſtand.* Prov. 19 21. It is in vain to truſt to humane means: For be our ſtrength never ſo great; or be thoſe that manage for us never ſo induſtrious; or be our hearts never ſo much united; Yet it is an eaſy matter for God to blaſt all our deſigns, and to diſappoint

disapoint all our Counsels in a moment.

He hath often done so, where Men have been confident in their own strength. In one nights time he made that prodigious Army of the *Assyrians*, that came up against *Jerusalem*, and thought themselves sure of taking it; to decamp and fly back into their own Country, leaving a hundred and fourscore thousand of their number dead upon the place. 2 Kings 19. 34.

There is in truth no trusting to an *arm of Flesh*. For the successes of War depend upon a thousand Contingencies, which it is not in the power of mortal Men, either to foresee, or remedy. So that *the race is not always to the swift, nor the battel to the strong; nor can a King be sav'd by the multitude of an Host, nor any mighty Man be delivered by his much strength.* But the *God of Heaven that ruleth in the Kingdoms of Men*; it is He that preserves or destroys; that gives Victory, or sends a Defeat, as it pleaseth him. And therefore he is, by way of eminence, stiled, *The Lord of Hosts*, the God of Battels. Eccles. 9. 11. Psal. 33. 16.

On the other hand, If our Affairs at any time be in so very bad a posture, that we cannot avoid the having a melancholy dismal prospect of things; yet let us not be discouraged, let us still trust in God; let us do what belongs

to

to us to do for the obtaining his Mercy and Favour, and then refer the Event to him. God hath certainly a kindneſs for his People, and if we do our parts towards the preſerving his Affection to us, we may ſtill hope he will continue to be our Saviour and Deliverer.

It is as eaſy to God *to ſave by few as by many.* the Walls of *Jericho*, at his Command, fell down flat, only at the ſound of Rams-Horns. And when the City of *Samaria* was Beſieged, and brought into the greateſt extremity that was poſſible, ſo that Women even ate their own Children: yet in one night, God by an unaccountable terrour, which he ſtruck into the hearts of the Enemies, raiſed the Siege. And ſuch plenty was left in their Camp, that every one of the Beſieged had wherewith, not only to ſatisfy his hunger, but to enrich himſelf. Only that Nobleman that would not believe this when it was foretold by the Prophet, did not live to taſte of the Fruits of God Almighty's Victory, being trodden to death in the Crowd.

Joſh. 6. 20.

2 Kings 7. ch.

II. But it is time to come to the ſecond general point I obſerved from this Text; *viz. That the Happineſs and Proſperity of Nations, is to be attained the ſame way that any particular Man's happineſs*

happineſs is; that is to ſay, *by being ſincerely virtuous and religious*; or, as my Text expreſſes it, *by fearing God, and keeping all his Commandments always.*

This is a true Propoſition, both with reſpect to particular Perſons and to Nations too; but with this difference, That if we take Happineſs and Proſperity for that which the World accounts ſo, that is to ſay, the poſſeſſion of a great many outward Bleſſings, and the freedom from temporal evils and inconveniencies; the Propoſition is not ſo univerſally true with reference to *particular Perſons*, as it is with reference to *Nations* and *Kingdoms*. For every Man that fears God is not always bleſſed with happy outward Circumſtances. On the contrary, ſome good Men are expoſed to many and great Afflictions, and Misfortunes, and Sickneſſes, and Croſſes, all their lives long. But it is certainly true of all *Nations* and *Peoples* whatſoever. Every Nation or Society ſhall fare better or worſe in this World, exactly, according as they fear God, or deſpiſe and affront him; exactly, according to the degree they keep God's Commandments, or break them. Though it is not certain, that every particular Man ſhall always do ſo. And

there is great reaſon that it ſhould be thus. For

First, We know that all God's ways are juſt and equal. Now as to *particular Perſons*, there is a great room left for the diſpenſing this Juſtice and Equity to them. For they being in their natures made to live for ever, it is enough for the vindicating God's Juſtice, that they be at any time hereafter, either rewarded for their Piety and Virtue, or puniſhed for their Wickedneſs and abuſe of God's Mercies. So that wicked Men may be happy and proſperous here, and good Men may ſuffer many afflictions and tribulations, without any the leaſt reflection on the Juſtice or Goodneſs of the great Governour of the World: Becauſe there is a farther day reſerved for the adjuſting all Mens Rewards according to their Works.

But now the conſideration of publick *Societies* and *Nations*, is quite different. Nations are not made to be Immortal, but end with this World. No Society, as a Society, ſhall be called to a future account. But all the Rewards and Puniſhments, they are capable of as Societies, muſt be adjudged and diſtributed to them in this preſent Life. And therefore if we ſuppoſe God to be the Judge and

Governour.

Governour of the World, and of all the Nations in it; as well as he is the Judge and Governour of particular Persons: We must likewise suppose, that he administers all affairs so, that Righteous and Religious Nations have in this World the reward of their Virtue in the blessings of Peace and Plenty, and all manner of temporal Prosperity: And on the other side, impious and incorrigible Nations are likewise punished in this World for their wickedness, either by severe Judgments, or by a total destruction; as God in his infinite Wisdom sees cause.

This now that I have offered is I think so reasonable, that if there was no more to be said, it ought to go a great way towards the making of the point I have in hand highly credible. But in the *second* place there is a great deal more to be said. The word of God doth all along bear testimony to the truth of this. A multitude of Texts of Scripture there are, that do most plainly give this account of God's dealing with Nations and Peoples, that I have now mentioned.

There is no Judgment threatned to any Nation in the holy Scripture (and abundance of Nations are there threatned) but it is upon

account of the ſins and wickedneſs they were guilty of. Which ſins, if they repented of, ſo repented as to forſake them, they might find mercy.

And accordingly we find in fact, that God always dealt with Peoples and Nations according to theſe meaſures. God had ſolemnly denounced deſtruction to the City of *Ninive*, by his Prophet, and that within forty days. But upon the Repentance of the *Ninevites*, and turning to God with all their hearts, he reverſed his Sentence (though to the great diſcontent of the Prophet) and gave them a further time.

On the other ſide he waited long for the Repentance of the *Canaanites*, but would not deſtroy them; becauſe their ſins, though very hainous, admitted a place for Repentance. But when their iniquities were filled up to the meaſures, according to which God proceeds in his deſtruction of Nations; He then ſent the *Iſraelites* to root them out, and to take poſſeſſion of their Land.

And thus was *Nebuchadnezzar* raiſed up by God to be a ſcourge to all the Nations about him, for the puniſhment of their ſins. *Nebuchadnezzar* had indeed other things in his head.

That

That which he designed was, the gratifying his own Ambition, and enlarging his Dominions. But these were not the ends which God had to serve by him. God made use of him as his Instrument, as his Servant (and so he calls him) for the rendring to the Nations that just recompence of vengeance which their sins called for.

I mention these things the rather, because they are instances of God's dealing with Heathen Nations, who were under no particular Covenant with God.

And I might have recourse likewise to the Histories of all Nations, to shew the truth of this. Name any Nation that was ever remarkable for Justice; for Temperance, and severity of Manners; for Piety and Religion (though it was in a wrong way); that did not always thrive and grow great in the World; and that did not always enjoy a plentiful portion of all those things which are accounted to make a Nation happy and flourishing. And on the other side, when that Nation has declined from its former Virtue, and grown impious or dissolute in manners, we appeal to Experience, whether it has not likewise always proportionably sunk in its Success and good Fortunes. I

am ſure any one that will be at the pains to read either the *Greek*, or the *Roman*, or even the *Turkiſh* Hiſtory, will meet with matter enough there, to ſatisfy him of the truth of this obſervation.

But I confine my ſelf to the Scripture, and in that the Hiſtory of the *Jews* is the moſt remarkable, for indeed it makes up a great part of the Old Teſtament. Now in that Hiſtory it is worth our taking notice of; That every degree of publick Vice, and departure from God's Laws, was always puniſhed with publick Judgments. And on the other ſide, every degree of publick Repentance and Reformation, was always rewarded with publick Happineſs and Proſperity. So that any one that could make a right eſtimate of the Morals of that Nation, and how it ſtood as to Virtue and Vice; might conſtantly make a judgment likewiſe how it would fare with them, as to their outward temporal affairs.

I muſt confeſs that generally ſpeaking, there is little force in thoſe Arguments that are drawn from Examples; But in the caſe I am now upon, I think there is a great weight in them. For though we cannot argue from God's dealing with one Perſon, that he will juſt

deal

deal in the ſame manner with another: Yet as to Nations and Kingdoms, the caſe is otherwiſe, as I before ſaid. For God's diſpenſations and Providences to them, ſeem all to proceed upon one immutable Foundation (which will be the ſame in all Ages and Countreys) namely the expreſſion and vindication of his Juſtice and Goodneſs in this World.

And for my part, I have always been of this mind, That there is no other difference between the Hiſtory of God's dealings with his own People the Jews, and that of other Nations, but this: That in other Nations the publick Events that happen'd, whether good or bad, though they were taken notice of, yet they paſſed without any reflection on the true cauſes from whence they proceeded. The Hiſtorians did indeed often lay their Fingers rightly upon the immediate, viſible, outward occaſions, or means, or inſtruments, from whence their good or bad Fortune was derived to them. But they ſearched no further. They conſidered only ſecond Cauſes, and took no great notice of the firſt and principal Cauſe of all things, God Almighty, and his influencing humane affairs. They left God in a great meaſure out of their Hypotheſis, and out of their

their Hiſtory. But now that the World might be awaken'd to a more hearty belief and ſenſe of his Providence, God took care to ſingle out the Nation of the Jews; and in them to give us a true Pattern or Platform of his dealings with all the Nations of the World. And for that purpoſe he ordered, that all the great ſtrokes, both of their departure from God, and of their return to him; And likewiſe both of the good or bad Fortune, that did at any time befal that Nation, ſhould be faithfully Regiſtred, and the true Cauſes of them faithfully aſſigned; That all Mankind might from thence receive Inſtruction how they ought to behave themſelves towards God; and what according to their different behaviours they were to expect.

To conclude this point: By all that hath been ſaid it appears, That the State, and Condition, and Fortune of all Kingdoms and Nations, is the very ſame with that of the Jews, as it is repreſented by *Achior* the *Ammonite*, in the advice he gave to *Holofernes*, when he came up with an Army againſt that People. You have the paſſage in *Judith* 5. 17. *Whilſt* (ſaith he) *theſe People ſinned not before their God, they proſpered; becauſe the God that hateth iniquity, was*

with

with them. But when they departed from the way that he appointed them, they were destroyed in many Battels, after a wonderful sort, and were led Captives into a land that was not theirs. But now they are turned to their God, and are come up from their Captivity, and have again possessed Jerusalem. *Now therefore, my Lord and Governour, if there be any fault in this People, so that they have sinned against their God, let us consider that this shall be their ruin, and let us go up that we may overcome them. But if there be no iniquity in this People, let my Lord pass by, lest their Lord defend them, and their God be for them, and we become a reproach before all the World.*

Thus it is, and will be always with all States and Nations, if they notoriously sin against their God, this will be their ruin. But if there be not found iniquity in them, it is in vain for any Enemy to set upon them; for God will be for them, and their Lord will defend them.

If this which I have said be not sufficient to satisfy any one about the truth of this point, I might bring other Proofs for it. I might, for instance, in the *third* place, insist upon this, That Vertue and Piety do, in their own nature, tend to promote the welfare and happiness of Peoples and Nations. As, on the other hand,

all Vice and Irreligion, is destructive of humane Society. And this without respect to any appointment or Decree of God, that things should be managed in this way; but purely in the very nature of the thing.

It is obvious, That Virtue and Religion lay the surest Foundation for all those Blessings wherein the happiness of a Nation doth consist, that is possible; both by making Magistrates to govern well, and by rendring the People easy to be governed. And likewise by furnishing both the Governours and the governed, with such kind of Principles and Habits as cannot fail with the Blessing of God to produce both Peace, and Plenty, and Victory, and all other sorts of Prosperity in a Nation.

As on the other hand, all Vice, and Wickedness, and Profaneness, and Impiety, do sow the worst Seeds in the World for the dissolving and breaking in pieces all Societies; or at least, for the so enfeebling them, that they shall either be in a very low, wretched condition among themselves, if they have no Enemies; or if they have any, become an easy prey to the next Invader.

But I will not enter upon this Argument, because I think the matter needs no further

proof. And I would spend the rest of my time, in making some Application of what hath been said upon this point, to the business of our present meeting on this day.

WE are here met together for the solemn Humiliation of our selves with *Fasting* and *Prayer*, before Almighty God: In order to the Supplicating his Divine Majesty for the Pardon of our Sins, and the Sins of our Nation; And the imploring his Blessing and Protection to the King and Kingdom, by continuing those Mercies to us we do enjoy; by averting those Judgments from us we have reason to fear; and more particularly by giving a Happy Issue to that dangerous War in which his Majesty, with the Kingdom, is now engaged.

And very great reason there is, that you the *Representatives* of the People of *England*, should most seriously, and solemnly, join in this Religious Office; since the Fortunes of the Nation you represent, did never more lie at stake than at this present.

You have hitherto been acting and endeavouring for the Happiness and Security of your Nation by *Humane* Methods, and we all put

up our daily Prayers, that what you have done, and what you ſhall do, may be *for the Glory of God, and the good of his Church; and the Safety, Honour and Welfare of their Majeſties and their Kingdoms.* And we hope all will ſo come to paſs.

But now on this Day, both *You* and *We*, are to think of other Methods, for the procuring Succeſs to our Affairs. Namely, by having recourſe to God Almighty; who, when we have done all that we can, is the Governour of the World, and will do what he pleaſeth. But yet will always do that which is beſt for Mankind, and that too which is beſt for our Nation, if we be capable Objects of his Favour. And to make our ſelves ſuch, if it be poſſible, is our buſineſs on this Day.

This is indeed a ſeaſonable Buſineſs at all times; but at this time it ſeems abſolutely neceſſary. Since we have reaſon to apprehend the *Criſis* of our Nation, as to *Happineſs* or *Ruin*, to be upon the point of approaching.

The Judgments of God are now abroad in the World. We have not only Rumours of Wars ſounding in our Ears, but all *Europe* is now in an actual War, and a terrible one. And what the Conſequences will be, we know not.

Some very great thing God certainly designs to bring to pass in these parts of the World, and that very suddenly. A Cup he has mingled for all the Nations to drink of. Which to some undoubtedly will prove a bitter Potion, a *Cup* of God's *Wrath* and *Fury*; to others probably a *Cup of Salvation*. But how it will prove to us, is yet entirely in the Will of God. However this is certain, that we of this Nation shall have as much our share in it, be it good or bad, as any other in Christendome.

And now after the mention of this, Can there be any need to call upon any one to *weeping* and *fasting*, and *mourning*, and *crying mightily to the Lord, that he would have mercy upon us, and spare us*, and our Nation, and *not give his Heritage over to Confusion*. Why methinks the Circumstances we are in, should put us upon so doing, without any other Monitors. Indeed we have no Humanity, no Compassion for our selves or our Country, if we do not.

We should all be of this mind, if we did seriously consider how things stand with us.

We are not that Innocent, Virtuous, Pious People, that may certainly reckon upon God's

Favour,

Favour, and think our ſelves in all Caſes ſure of his Protection. For if the Doctrine I have now been inſiſting on to you, be true Doctrine; then we of this Nation can but entertain very ſmall hopes of being Happy and Proſperous. Nay, we cannot but apprehend Miſery and Ruin, and Deſolation to our ſelves, unleſs God be abundantly more merciful to us than we deſerve. And there can be no way to prevail with him to be ſo, but an univerſal *Humiliation* and *Repentance*. And this is the Application I deſire to make of the Point I have been now treating of.

If the meaſure of God's dealing with Nations be always according to the *Moral* State of them. If their *good Fortunes* be dealt out to them according to their *Virtues*; and *Judgments* be inflicted upon them, according to their provoking God by their *Sins*; as we have ſaid: Good Lord! What a lamentable Proſpect have we of this Kingdom of what may come upon us? And what infinite reaſon have we thereupon, immediately to try all the ways that are poſſible of making our Peace with God, that ſo *Iniquity may not be our ruin.*

I beg leave to dwell a little upon this Point, becauſe it is the proper Argument of the day.

I

I do not say, nor do I think, that we of this Nation are worse than our Neighbours. But this I say, considering how long God hath spared us, and how long we have enjoyed the Blessings of Peace and Plenty, and all sorts of Prosperity (though perhaps with many Fears and just Apprehensions of danger); whilst most of our Neighbours have been harassed with Wars, and exposed to all the Cruelties and Miseries of Persecutions and Devastations: And considering the great Priviledges and Advantages we have for many years enjoyed, of all the outward *means* of *Grace*, that could be desired for the Eternal Salvation of our Souls, and that above any other Nation under Heaven; And withal, how unprofitable we have been under these *means*, how unthankful to God for them, and what little effect they have had upon us for the bettering our Manners. And lastly, Considering how very wicked we generally are, what a World of open gross Sins and Impieties do reign among us, and what a lewd, Profane, Hypocritical, Atheistical Spirit seems to have gone out into the Nation, and to prevail upon it. I say, these things considered, we cannot make any very comfortable Reflections on our own Condi-

tion. So far from that, that if (as I ſaid) the meaſure of God's dealings with Nations be taken from their Behaviours and moral Qualities, and be ſuited to their merits and deſerts; we have as little to hope for as moſt Nations under Heaven.

I take no delight in ſaying theſe things; on the contrary it is very grievous: But if ever one may be allowed to run out into a *Declamation* againſt the *Vices* of the *Times*, it is upon ſuch an occaſion as this, and before ſuch an Audience as this, that the liberty may be challenged.

For God's ſake let us not deceive our ſelves; nor think that we are the Favourites of Heaven, meerly becauſe we profeſs the *Beſt Religion*, and are Members of the *Beſt Church* in the World.

For as good as our Church and Religion is, and as zealous as we ſeem to be for them; yet never did *Vice* and *Iniquity* of all ſorts, and indeed every thing that is contrary to our holy Religion, more abound in this Nation than at this day.

Give me leave to ſpeak out upon this occaſion, and to tell you of ſome of the *Crying Sins* that reign among us, and that deſerve *Your Care*

to

to put a stop to; and which, if they be continued in, will certainly bring down the Vengeance of God upon us.

Where was there ever more *Atheism* and *Infidelity* to be seen in a Country that professed the Religion of Jesus Christ, than is among us at this day?

We do not perhaps meet with very many that do openly affirm, *There is no God*: For as bad as we are, God be thanked we are not yet arrived to such Impudence. That is such an affront to the *Laws* and to all *good Manners*, that it is not to be born with. But we may meet with several, every day, that do affirm the same thing by consequence; asserting such Principles from whence it may be necessarily concluded.

For my part, I account it much the same thing, as to the ill effects of the Opinion, to deny the Being of *God*, as to deny the Being of *Angels*, and *Spirits*, and *Immaterial Souls*; to deny the Being of *particular Providence*; to deny the natural difference between *good* and *evil*; to deny another Life after this, wherein good Men shall be rewarded, and wicked Men punished; to deny the liberty of *Humane Actions*, and to say, that all things which we do, we

do by a fatal necessity, and we cannot do otherwise: And yet we may every day meet with Men of these Principles, nay, and that laugh at all those that maintain the contrary.

But then, as for the business of *Jesus Christ*, and that which we call the Christian Religion, what a very little do a great many among us make of that? To talk of Christ's being sent for the Saviour of the World, and that he died to procure the Pardon of our Sins, and that we must believe All the Scripture-Doctrine concerning him, and worship him as a God, why what *stuff* is this to a great many of the refined Spirits of our Age? It is very well if they can so far prevail with themselves, as to own the Being of God, and to acknowledge their obligation to the Duties of moral Honesty and Justice, which *natural* Religion teaches. But as for *Jesus Christ* and the *Trinity*, and the *Sacraments*, and all *revealed* Religion; they beg your Pardon for these things, they are too fine and subtil for them to meddle with. Not but that they are good Christians all the while. For they can come to our Churches, and to our Sacraments too, if there be occasion. Because indeed they will always be of the Religion

gion of the Country where they live. But at the same time they do this; they do no more really believe, or expect any Spiritual Benefit in our Religion, nor look for any more *Salvation* from *Christ Jesus*, than they would expect from *Mahomet*, if they should live in *Turky*.

But this is not all. Even among those that do believe in Jesus Christ, and own his Religion; yet what little regard have they, generally speaking, to his Worship and Service.

It is very well if they now and then afford their presence on *Sundays* at the publick Religious Assemblies. I will not examine with what designs, and for what ends they come thither, nor how devoutly and religiously their hearts are affected during the time they are there. I say it is very well that they are there at all.

But even of those that do come thither, and do once a Week seem to have a sense of publick Religion, I say how few are there of them that take any care of worshipping God, either in their *Families*, or in their *Closets*?

Why, if a Man was truly Religious, he could not pass a day without solemn Addres-

ses to his *Maker*, and to his *Redeemer*, He would pray in his Closet constantly; and if he had a Family, he would pray with them constantly. And if he had no Family, he would constantly resort to those places where he might pay his Tribute of publick Prayer and Praises to God, unless he had urgent busines to hinder him.

But, is there any thing of this to be seen among us, except in some few persons here and there? Are there not twenty Families for one that live without so much as the shew of any Devotion? Without any sort of Prayer or Worship of God in their Houses? Nay, and I am afraid, I may say, there are twenty for one, even of private Persons, that live without Devotion in their Closets; that never call upon God, never renew their vows to their Saviour, never pay him any Homage, except perhaps once a Week in a formal way, when the Custom of the Country obliges them to resort to the Church.

The truth is, so little sense have most of us of Religion and Devotion, so little regard of our Duty to God, and our dependance upon him, and expressing that dependance, either in private, or in our Families: That were it

not

not for that *Happy* Institution of the *Lord's day*, on the which we are obliged, by the Laws of God and Man, to meet together for the Worship of God; we should hardly see any Face of Religion among us, and in a little time should scarce be distinguished from Heathens.

But yet this is not the worst of our Case. Our gross *Immoralities*; that Horrid *Lewdness* and *Debauchery* that is every where to be observed in our days, doth still increase our Guilt, and cry to Heaven for Judgment upon our Nation.

It would make a Man's heart ake, that has any sense of God or Religion, to think of the *Riots*, the *Drunkenness*, the continued course of spending our time, and our Parts, and our substance, in *Revelling* and *Gaming*, and all manner of such excesses that is daily practised among us. And yet at the same time, the Men that thus live, think themselves very honest Men all the while.

It would really amaze a Man, and put him upon admiring God's Patience, that he doth not presently confound the World, if he did seriously reflect on the many *filthy*, *lewd* Speeches and Actions; the numerous wicked intrigues of *Lust*, the Infamous *Whoredoms* and *Adulteries* that are, without any sense of shame, daily

carried

carried on and acted among us, and that by Persons too that have the Face to shew themselves at our Holy Assemblies.

Especially, if to these be added, the infinite *Lies*, and *Cheats*, and *Perjuries*, which our Land groans under. The Blasphemous *Oaths* and *Imprecations*, the *Damn me's* and *Sink me's*; the Horrid Profanations of the Name of God, and all things Sacred, that are in every place, in every street where we pass, belched out, in contempt of the *Almighty* and his Laws; by all sorts of *Persons*, of all sorts of *Qualities*, from the *Beggar* in the street to the *Man of Honour*, and that for no other reason in the World, but because it is their Humour or their Custom.

And lastly, to fill up the measure of our iniquities; to our other reigning Vices, we have added that of *Hypocrisy* too; which one would think should not often be found among so much *Profaneness*.

How many of us make a mighty noise with *Religion*, and are Zealous even to *Bigottry*, in the defence of it, and yet have not one grane of inward sense of what it obligeth them to. Nay so far from that, that if *Religion* be but in their mouths. If they do but appear Zealous enough for the *Protestant Cause*; If they can but

cry

cry loud enough, *The Temple of the Lord, The Temple of the Lord*, as the Jews did in the Prophet; They matter not, how contradictory their Actions are to the Precepts of that Religion they do profess. Their Zeal for so good a Cause, will sanctify all their other Actions, be they never so wicked and unjust.

But if this be not *Hypocrisy*, there is no such thing in the World. Sure I am, it was this sort of Carriage, that God so often reproves the Jews for, by his Prophets; and upon account of which they are so often reproached as a Generation of *Hypocrites*, and for which he threatens them with utter destruction.

O my Brethren, what have we to say to these things? If the Case be thus with us, as I am afraid it is; What Plea have we to put in for our selves? If God should let loose our Enemies upon us, the Enemies of our *Nation*, and of our *Religion*, and should give us over as a Prey unto them, what have we to reply? Truly nothing that I know of, except that of the Psalmist, *Righteous art thou, O Lord, and just are thy Judgments!*

But we trust God's Lenity, and Forbearance, and Mercy, is as great to *Publick Societies* and *Kingdoms*, as it is to *Private Persons*; And, that

that we may apply those expressions to our Nation which *David* uttered, with reference to himself: *O Lord, if thou shouldst be extream to mark what is done amiss, O Lord, who may abide it? But there is Mercy with thee, that thou mayest be feared.*

When the Iniquities of a People are at the full, God will not fail to punish them. But whether ours be so or no, He only knows. We hope, though they be very *grievous* and *crying*, they have not yet exceeded the measure of God's Patience; and that there is yet left a place for Repentance. This is indeed the only *Plank* we have to trust to, that can save us from *Shipwrack*; and therefore we ought to lay hold upon it.

Let us therefore this day, every one of us; If we have any kindness for our Native Country: If we have any respect to that dear Place, where we and our Ancestors, and all our Relations and Kindred for many Generations have lived so happily:

If we have any Zeal for, or regard to that excellent *Church*, and that Holy *Religion*, that God did in so extraordinary a manner plant among us; and for the preserving of which in our Land, His Care and Providence hath so often and so wonderfully appear'd: If

If we have any Concernment for many thousands of innocent Souls, who without their own fault may deeply suffer for the Nations Sins:

Lastly, If we have any Bowels of Compassion to those dear Children of ours, that God hath given us, that we may transmit to them and their Children after them, that *Birth-right*, and those *Priviledges*, and that excellent *Religion* we received from our Fathers:

I say, if we have any sense of these things, let every one of us this day, most sincerely apply our selves to the Service of God, in all the ways of a serious Virtue and Piety. Or if we have been careless of this matter heretofore; or which is worse, have been lewd or wicked in our lives; yet let us now at last heartily repent of it. And with *Prayers* and *Tears*, and the most solemn *Resolutions* of *Amendment*, prostrate our selves before the Throne of Grace; imploring and beseeching God's Pardon and Forgiveness, and, if it be possible, *a lengthening of our Tranquillity.*

O let us not refuse this Opportunity of doing the greatest Kindness, and the best service to our Country, that we possibly can. And therefore let us not only heartily bewail our own

Sins, but the reigning Impieties and Wickedneſs, that our Nation ſtands accountable for.

Now is the time, if ever, that we are all concerned to be importunate with God for our ſelves and our Country.

And a fitter *Prayer* for this purpoſe cannot be compoſed for us, than that which *Daniel* put up to God for his Nation, and that at ſuch a ſolemn time as this, when, as he tells us, he had *ſet himſelf to ſeek God, for his People, by Prayer and Supplication, with Faſting, and Sackcloth and Aſhes.*

The Prayer is in the 9th Chapter of his Prophecy; and I ſhall conclude with it, and I earneſtly beg of you all, to join with me in it.

O Lord the great and dreadful God, that keepeſt the Covenant, and ſheweſt mercy to them that love thee, and to them that keep thy Commandments.

We have ſinned and done wickedly, and have committed Iniquity, and have rebelled; even by departing from thy Precepts, and from thy Judgments.

O Lord, Righteouſneſs belongeth unto thee; but unto us confuſion of face as at this day; to the Men of Judah, *and to the Inhabitants of* Jeruſalem, *becauſe we have ſinned againſt thee.*

But

But unto the Lord our God belongeth Mercy and Forgiveneſs, though we have rebelled againſt him; neither have we obeyed the voice of the Lord our God, to walk in his Laws which he ſet before us.

O Lord, according to all thy Righteouſneſs, we beſeech thee, let thy anger and thy fury be turned away from thy City Jeruſalem, *thy holy Mountain. Becauſe for our ſins, and the iniquities of our Fathers,* Jeruſalem *and thy People are become a reproach to all that are about us.*

Now therefore, O God, hear the Prayer of thy Servants, and cauſe thy Face to ſhine upon thy Sanctuary.

O God incline thine ear and hear: Open thine Eyes, and behold the City which is called by thy Name.

O Lord hear. O Lord forgive. O Lord hearken and do. Defer not for thy own ſake, O our God. For thy City, and thy People, are called by thy Name.

And whilſt *Daniel* was thus praying, and confeſſing his ſins, and the ſins of his People unto the Lord, and ſupplicating for his City *Jeruſalem:* Behold the Angel *Gabriel* was ſent unto him from the Lord, with the glad tidings that God had heard his Prayer for *Jeruſalem*, and that it ſhould be built, and the Lord would dwell in it.

O

O may we all thus *faſt* and *pray*, as *Daniel* did, and may God Almighty give us ſuch a return of our Prayers, *Amen*, *O God for Jeſus Chriſt his ſake, to whom*, &c.

FINIS.

Books Written by the ſame Authour, and Printed for Walter Kettilby, *at the Biſhop's-Head in* St. Paul's *Church-Yard.*

A Diſcourſe concerning Conſcience; the firſt Part: wherein an account is given of the Nature, and Rule, and Obligation of it. And the caſe of thoſe who ſeparate from the Communion of the Church of *England*, as by Law eſtabliſhed, upon this pretence, that it is againſt their Conſcience to join in it, is ſtated and diſcuſſed.

A diſcourſe of Conſcience: The ſecond Part; concerning a doubting Conſcience.

A Faſt-Sermon before the Houſe of Commons, *April* 11. 1679. on *Revel.* ii. 5.

The Duty and Happineſs of doing good, in two Sermons, the former Preached at the *Yorkſhire* Feaſt, *Feb.* 17. 1679. on *Eccl.* iii. 10. the other before the Lord Mayor at the *Spittle*, *Apr.* 14. 1680. on 1 *Tim.* vi. 17, 18, 19.

A Sermon at the Election of the Lord Mayor, *Sept.* 29. 1680. on *Pſal.* cxii. 4.

A Lent-Sermon at *Whitehal*, *March* 20. 1684. on *Luke* xvi. 31.

A Sermon before the Queen at *Whitehall*, *Apr.* 11. 1690. on *Gal.* v. 13.

(10)

A SERMON

Preached on the 28th. of *June*,

AT

St *GILES* in the *Fields*,

BY

John Sharp, D.D.

Arch-Biſhop of *YORK* Elect,

At his leaving ye Pariſh.

Publiſhed at the Requeſt of the GENTLEMEN of the VESTRY.

The Third Edition.

LONDON:

Printed for *Walter Kettilby*, at the *Biſhops Head* in S. *Paul's* Church-Yard. 1691.

Philip. iv. 8.

Finally, Brethren, whatſoever things are true, whatſoever things are honeſt, whatſoever things are juſt, whatſoever things are pure, whatſoever things are lovely, whatſoever things are of good report; if there be any vertue, and if there be any praiſe, think on theſe things.

I Have the two laſt Lord's Days, made it my buſineſs to treat of this Text, in a way that I thought did moſt tend to the informing your Judgments: And to that purpoſe I have raiſed ſeveral Obſervations, and drawn ſeveral Inferences from it.

I mean now to Treat of it in another way, and to apply my ſelf wholly to the preſſing you to the Practice of it.

And indeed the Nature of the Sermon I am to make, doth call for this from me. For I am now to take my leave of you; this being the laſt time in all probability that I ſhall Preach among you as your Miniſter: And therefore I ſuppoſe good Advice and Exhortation will more become me at this time, than a cloſe Diſcourſe upon a Text.

And yet, my Text doth afford matter enough, without ſtraining it, for ſuch a purpoſe: Nor indeed

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do I know a Text in the Bible, that I could more willingly pitch upon to leave with you, as the laſt advice I would give you, and as the Sum and Concluſion of my Preaching among you; than theſe Words of St. *Paul* I have now read to you.

Let me therefore at this time addreſs my ſelf to you all, as the Apoſtle here did at the concluſion of his Epiſtle to the *Philippians*, *Finally Brethren whatſoever things are true*, &c.

Here are a great many things recommended by the Apoſtle to our thoughts and purſuit. If we would make a diſtribution of them, I believe they will all naturally enough fall under theſe *Four* Heads. For the *things* here recommended are not ſo many as the *words* by which they are expreſt; there being ſeveral Words uſed in this Enumeration, that are of the ſame importance, and ſeem to expreſs much the ſame thing.

The *Four* Heads I would reduce them to are theſe,

I. *A conſtant Adherence to the true Religion.*

II. *Honeſty and Juſtice in our Dealings.*

III. *A Life of ſtrict* Purity, *in oppoſition to* Senſuality and Lewdneſs.

IV. *The adorning the Doctrine of God we do profeſs, by the conſtant Practice of every other thing that is Virtuous or Commendable, or well thought of by Mankind.*

This, as I take it, is a fair account of the Parts of this Text: and theſe I ſhall make the Heads of my following Exhortation.

I begin with the firſt. *Finally my Brethren whatſoever things are true, think on thoſe things.*

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The *Truths* that S. *Paul* here exhorts them to think on are undoubtedly the *Truths* of the Goſpel of Jeſus Chriſt which he had delivered to them. Theſe he would have them to think upon, and perſiſt in, and never to be prevailed upon by any Temptation to depart from them.

Let me now apply this Advice of his to you. It is the particular Bleſſing of God to this Kingdom, and an ineſtimable Bleſſing it is, that he has not only vouchſafed us the Light of his Goſpel for many years, but He has alſo taken Care that the *Truths* of it ſhould be delivered to us with greater Purity and Sincerity, and freer from the mixtures of Errour than to moſt, I was going to ſay, than to any other People in the World.

If it lay in your way to make obſervations concerning the State of Religion in other Countries; nay or but to read the Accounts that are given of it: I am ſure you would be convinced how exceedingly happy we of this Church are, above all the other Churches in Chriſtendom.

O therefore let us all firmly adhere to the *Truths* we have been taught; to the *Truths* we have hitherto made Profeſſion of. And let us firmly adhere to that *Church* which hath held forth theſe *Truths* to us, and taught us this Profeſſion.

We do not pretend that any Church is Infallible, and therefore not ours: But this we dare ſay and we can juſtifie; that if we take our meaſures concerning the Truths of Religion from the Rules of the Holy Scriptures, and the Platform of the Primitive Churches,

the Church of *England* is undoubtedly both as to Doctrine and Worship, the Purest Church that is at this day in the World; the most Orthodox in Faith, and the freest on the one hand from *Idolatry* and *Superstition*, and on the other hand from *Freakishness* and *Enthusiasm* of any now extant.

Nay I do farther say with great seriousness, and as one that expects to be called to account at the dreadful Tribunal of God for what I now say, if I do not speak in sincerity: That I do in my Conscience believe, that if the Religion of Jesus Christ, as it is deliver'd in the New Testament, be the true Religion (as I am certain it is:) Then the Communion of the Church of *England* is a safe way to Salvation, and the safest of any I know in the World.

And therefore I do exhort you all in the Name of God, stedfastly to hold and to persevere in this Communion.

Here you have the *Things that are true.* Think of them and embrace them heartily; and Live and Die in the Profession of them. This is the Doctrine I have always Taught you, and by the Grace of God I mean to Practise accordingly.

II. The next thing I have to recommend to you from these words of the Apostle is Universal *Honesty* and *Justice* and *Righteousness* in your Conversation. *Whatsoever things* (saith he) *are true, whatsoever things are honest; whatsoever things are just*; think on these things.

You see I join these two words *Honest* and *Just* together, as importing the same thing. Tho yet I

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am aware that the word we here render *Honest* is often used in another signification, that is to say for *Grave* or *Venerable*: But since that other signification falls in most properly under my last Head, I wave it here and take the word as our Translation renders it.] Indeed it is in vain to expect any advantage from our profession of the *Truth*, if we be not sincerely *Just* and *Honest* in our Actions.

Whosoever can allow himself in the practice of any dishonest, knavish, indirect Dealing, let that Man be never so Orthodox in his Belief and Opinions; yet I am sure he is no true Christian.

O therefore let me exhort you all, whatever Interests you have to serve; whatever Dealings you are ingaged in, to be always strictly *Just* and *Upright* in your Conversation. Use no Tricks, practise no ill Arts for the serving your ends, but in all your transactions with Men, deal with that Simplicity and Integrity and good Conscience, that becomes those who would be accounted the Disciples of Him who was the most Innocent, the most Sincere, and the least Intriguing Person in the World.

Assure your selves no dishonesty can prosper long. Whatever turns you may serve by it at present, yet you will bitterly repent of it sometime or other. But Righteousness and Justice doth establish a mans ways. And the upright Man, tho he is not always the richest, yet always walketh most surely. And as for the final event of things; Remember this that God Almighty has pronounced that *no Unrighteous* men, *no Covetous, no Liars, no Extortioners, shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.* But to go on.

III. The next thing I have to exhort you to from the words of my Text is the Practice of *Purity*. For after the Apostle hath recommended the pursuit of *things* that are *true*, and the things that are *honest* and *just*, he next adds the things that are *pure*. Meaning hereby that we should study to be pure and chast and temperate both in our Hearts and Lives; avoiding all Excesses, and Lewdness, and Sensuality.

And if he thought it convenient in that Age of strictness and severity and devotion, to put the Christians in mind of this: I am sure it is not only convenient but necessary to do it, in this Age of ours, when Luxury and Debauchery, when Whoredom and Drunkenness, and all sorts of Vices that are contrary to *Purity*, are grown to that height among us, that we seem to defie God Almighty by our impudent Practice of them, and provoke Him to give us up to Destruction.

I pray God make the whole Nation deeply sensible of the Folly and Wickedness, as well as of the danger and dreadful Consequences of these Practices. And as for you who are here present, let me bespeak you in the Words of the Apostle; *Dearly Beloved, I beseech you as Strangers and Pilgrims, to abstain from fleshly Lusts, which war against the Soul.* I beseech you as you have any Honor for your Lord and Master, as you have any regard to the preservation of a Sense of Religion in your Minds, as you have any concern for your Health, for your Estates, for your Families; as you have any respect to the Publick, that Effeminacy and Sottishness and Diseases may not be entailed upon our Posterity; lastly as you love your own

Souls

Souls, and hope ever to see the face of God in Heaven, learn to live Soberly, learn to live Chastly, learn to practise Purity and Temperance in all your Conversation. Avoid Whoredom and Drunkenness as you would the Plague, for certainly they are the worst of Plagues to them that use them: For other Plagues do only put our Bodies in danger, but these do endanger both our Souls and Bodies. Nay as to the one (I mean our Souls) they will prove certain inevitable Destruction without Repentance and Reformation.

I know these things are made slight Matters of by a great many among us. But assure your selves God will not account them so; it is certain he will not, if we may believe his Word; for it is there told us expresly that *Whoremongers and Adulterers God will judge.* And withal, that *neither Adulterers, nor Fornicators, nor unclean Persons, nor Drunkards shall ever inherit the Kingdom of God or of Christ.*

IV. I proceed to the last Head of Advice that is given in my Text. The Apostle having instanced in *Three* things necessary to be daily thought upon and pursued by all Christians, *viz. Truth* and *Honesty* and *Purity*, leaves off to meddle any farther with particulars, and sums up the rest of his Advice in generals. And that sum comes to this, that as we are Christians we should not only take care of the three forementioned things, but should make it our business to improve our selves in every other sort of Virtue; nay in every other sort of thing that is *Praise-worthy*, or that is well esteemed of among Mankind. So that really it should be the endeavor of our Lives to render our selves as excellent and as exemplary for all sorts of a-

miable Qualities as it is possible for men to be in this World.

This I take to be the full meaning of those *four* expressions that follow in my Text, *Whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, if there be any Virtue, if there be any Praise, think of these things.*

And now Brethren, see from hence what your Obligations are. You that have such a glorious Light vouchsafed you; such unvaluable Promises, such mighty Assistances made over to you by the Gospel of Christ: You must in Reason imagine that in return of these great Advantages, great things are expected from you.

It will not satisfie your Engagements, that you do believe and profess the Gospel, that you do no wrong to your Neighbours, that you are neither given to Lewdness nor Drunkenness, (tho yet even these, as the World goes, are very great things, and could all Men that profess Christianity truly say this of themselves, we should soon see Heaven upon Earth). But your Christianity obliges you to aspire after greater things: you must get your selves possessed of the whole Circle of Virtues: you must be *Kind* and *Charitable*, as well as *Just* and *Honest*: you must be *Modest* and *Meek* and *Humble*, as well as *Temperate* and *Chast*.

Nay not only so, but you are to labour after all these several Virtues, in the full Latitude and Extent of them, even to that degree that every thing which hath but the *appearance of Evil* is to be avoided by you. You are not only to abstain from Acts of Injustice, but even from doing a *hard* thing to any one: you are not only to keep your selves within the known

Limits of Temperance and Chaſtity, but to avoid all thoſe things that border upon the Vices oppoſite thereunto, and ſo as to all other inſtances; if any thing be of *ill Report*, and looks infamouſly to the ſober part of Mankind, why that very Conſideration is enough to deter you from the Practice of it; For you are to recommend your Religion to all the Men in the World, by all the ways that are poſſible.

In a Word you are to endeavour to be as free from blame in your whole Converſation as you poſſibly can, and not only ſo, but to be as good, and to do as much good as your Circumſtances will allow you.

This now is to be a Chriſtian indeed; by thus endeavouring you truly walk worthy of that high and heavenly Calling, wherewith you are called, and you do (as the Apoſtle adviſes) *adorn the Doctrine of God in all things*; and happy, extreamly happy are they that do thus, for great is their Reward: Great even in this World in the ſolid Peace and Aſſurance of Gods Favor which they here enjoy, and which indeed far exceeds all the Bleſſings that the Earth can afford; but exceedingly great in the Life to come, when Jeſus Chriſt ſhall come with all the Powers of Heaven to do Honor to thoſe that have thus here honoured him.

Thus have I gone through all the parts of my Text, but I do not think that I ought ſo to leave it. I have given you an account of the things that St. *Paul* hath here directed us to, to be the main purſuit of our Lives. But I think likewiſe it will be proper to ſpeak ſomething of the Methods of that purſuit, or the means

means which we are to observe, if we would practise this Text; and here I am to begin anew with my Advices. Several things I have to represent upon this Occasion and to exhort you to. I am not much solicitous, whether they strictly belong to my Argument or no. But I desire to leave them with you, as things that I judge to be very useful, and which I wish may be ever remembred by you.

And the *First* thing I would exhort you to is this, *That you would endeavour to possess your Minds with a hearty Sense of God Almighty, and the absolute Necessity of being seriously Religious.*

I do not mention this, as if I thought there was any need to caution you against *Atheism* or *Infidelity*, for I hope not many among us are inclined that way. Mankind are naturally disposed to believe a God and Religion, and since through God's Blessing it is *Christianity* that is the Religion of our Country, and in which we have been all Educated: I look upon an *Atheist* or an *Infidel* among us, to be a sort of *Prodigy*, a strange unusual Creature, vastly different from those of his own Kind.

But here is the thing. Though most of us profess Religion and the true Religion, yet many of us have no lively or hearty Sense of it. We use Religion as we do our Cloths. They are very convenient, nay perhaps necessary, and therefore we wear them, and for the particular form or mode of them we follow, as to that, the Custom of the Countrey where we live. Yet as the Cloths we wear do not alter the Complexion or Features of our Body, so neither doth the

the Religion we Profeſs any more affect the Temper of our Souls. We ſerve our ſelves in both Caſes of the outward Conveniencies that are to be had by them, but we are ſtill the ſame to our Perſons both as outward and inward Lineaments.

But alas this is a very ſorry way of being Religious and will do us no great kindneſs. We may perhaps reap ſome ſecular advantages by it, but yet even the very trouble and pains it puts us to, do equal the Conveniencies we have from it. The Men that live thus, are juſt ſervedlike thoſe that work in rich Mines. They are daily imployed about Gold and Silver or Gems, and they work hard, and they have their days wages for their Labour, but they are not a whit the richer for the Treaſures that come into their hands.

Your Religion will never ſerve you to any extraordinary purpoſes, till your Hearts be affected with it as well as your Underſtandings. Let me therefore adviſe you, as you love either your Happineſs in this World, or in the next, make it your principal care to get a lively and vigorous Senſe of God impreſſed upon your Minds. And look upon it as the greateſt Intereſt you have to carry on, the greateſt Buſineſs you have to do in this World (as it really is) to approve your ſelves to this God by a ſincere endeavour in all your Converſation, to walk as his Son Jeſus Chriſt hath taught you. If you do this, you will certainly find the Sweet and Comfort of it both here and hereafter.

When all is ſaid, it is a vain thing for any man to expect a tolerable eaſie paſſage through this World, unleſs he have the Hopes of Gods Favour to ſupport him under the Multitude of evil Accidents which the State of Humane Life will neceſſarily expoſe him to. And as for the other World, without theſe Hopes he is perfectly loſt: And to be able to entertain any rational Hopes of God's Bleſſing and Favour, is

a very vain thing likewiſe, unleſs we make it our buſineſs with our whole Hearts and Souls to ſerve and pleaſe and obey Him.

There are a great many Rules and Maxims that we uſe to give to our Friends or our Children for the making their Fortunes, and I cannot deny but they are exceeding good ones. Thus for inſtance, we adviſe them to get a true underſtanding of their Buſineſs, and to purſue it diligently, to keep out of ill Company, to avoid Drinking or Gaming and Lewdneſs, and to ſtudy the Tempers and Humors of Mankind, and to learn to apply themſelves dexterouſly to thoſe they have occaſion to converſe with; why theſe and ſuch others are excellent Rules and moſt worthy of all Men to be ſtudied and practiſed. But ſtill there is one Rule above all theſe, and without which all the other will ſignifie very little to the making a Mans Life eaſie and comfortable; and that is to preſerve a lively ſenſe of God upon our Spirits, to have his Fear always before our Eyes, to love him above all things, to value his Favor more than Life, and to dread his Diſpleaſure as the worſt of Evils. If we can but once get our Souls into this frame, we have done our Buſineſs both for this World and for Eternity; All the other particular Rules and Advices will be in a great meaſure ſuperfluous; for he that is poſſeſſed of this good Principle will of courſe naturally fall into the practice of them. And beſides this Fear and Love of God in our Hearts, as it is the moſt effectual means, according to the uſual Diſpoſition of the Divine Providence, to put us into good Circumſtances of Living; ſo it is the only means of making our Circumſtances happy to us, if they be good, or of making them eaſie and ſupportable, if they be bad.

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I do therefore moſt earneſtly recommend it to you, as you deſire that either you or yours may proſper, nay, as you would not be very miſerable; be not contented with a ſuperficial outſide Religion, but affect your minds as deeply as is poſſible with a ſenſe of God, and what you owe to him; and endeavour to impreſs the ſame ſenſe upon your Friends and Children, and all that are about you. The truth of it is, ſo much doth our preſent happineſs, as well as our future, depend upon this belief of God, and love to him, and hopes of his favour; that were it not for this, the preſent World with all the imaginary pleaſures and glories of it would appear to all wiſe and good men, not only an empty dull unſatisfactory place, but a diſmal melancholy priſon. If it was ſuppos'd that all things here were the effects of blind Chance, or fatal Neceſſity, and that there were no Wiſdom and Goodneſs that did preſide over the World, or took care of Mankind; no conſidering man could deſire to live here.

The *Second* thing I would leave with you, is this, That after you have got into your minds a hearty ſence of God and his Providence, and his preſence and goodneſs; ſo as that you mean to make it the buſineſs of your lives to recommend your ſelves to him: you would in the next place, take care to keep up that ſenſe by *a conſtant and daily Worſhip of him.*

For God's ſake, and for your own Souls ſake, do not neglect your Prayers. You muſt never think that God will bleſs you, if you do not make a Conſcience of daily paying him your tribute of Honour and Worſhip.

Be ſure therefore, you be conſtant in your private Devotions. As you every day receive the renewed pledges of God's love and goodneſs towards you in a thouſand inſtances: ſo let every day your affection and gratitude be expreſs'd to him, by hearty Prayer and Thankſgiving. This is abſolutely neceſſary to be done, as I have often told you, if you mean to preſerve any hearty ſenſe of Religion in your minds.

But beſides this I have another thing to recommend to all thoſe that have Families. They are Heads and Governours of a *Society*. For indeed the firſt notion of *Society* is that of a *Family*. Every Family is a little Kingdom, and every Kingdom is or ought to be a great Family. Now is it natural, is it decent, that there ſhould be any Society upon earth wherein God ſhould not be owned and worſhipped? And yet woe be to us, how many thouſands of Families are there in this Kingdom, nay, I am afraid, even in and about this City, wherein God is not ſo much as named in publick, unleſs perhaps by the way of affront, by the way of *Curſing* or *Swearing*.

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We deſervedly complain of the great looſeneſs and profaneneſs and irreligion that hath overſpread the face of this Nation. O! I doubt a great deal of the blame of it lies upon the Houſholders, the Maſters of Families among us. If they would take better care of their Children and Servants, and let them know what it is to worſhip God, things would not be ſo bad among us. But how can we expect better, when there is no Religion either taught or practiſed in our houſes. We give our domeſticks opportunities enough, of learning all our bad qualities; but we give them none of learning our good ones, if we have any.

They ſee us offending God by many raſh words and ſinful actions; but they do not ſee us repenting, and asking God's pardon by our ſolemn Prayers and applications to the Throne of Grace. Let us therefore ſeriouſly lay this point to heart. I am ſure we have juſt cauſe to do it. Let us bring Religion into our Families, and not be contented that once a week ſome of our people in their turns ſhould hear ſomething of it. Let us every day call our family together, and pay our common tribute of Prayer and Praiſe for the mercies we do daily receive in common.

Methinks our Saviour ſeemed to have a reſpect to this very duty, and to charge it mightily upon us, when he made us that gracious pro-

miſe that even, *where two or three were gathered together in his name, there would he be in the midſt of them.* Sure, his words have moſt naturally a reſpect to the worſhip of God that is perform'd in Families. As hath likewiſe the very contrivance of the Lord's Prayer: all the Petitions thereof being ſo framed, as to be moſt proper to be ſaid by more than one, and yet too when we have ſhut our doors for that purpoſe. But,

Thirdly, As you ought to take care about the worſhip of God in your Cloſets and in your Families; let me add, that it equally concerns you to frequent the more publick worſhip of God in his own houſe. It is a bad ſign of ſome very ill Principle or other, for any man to be much a ſtranger there. Even to have the liberty and opportunity of worſhipping God in publick, is one of the greateſt bleſſings and priviledges that we can have in this World; and hath by good men always been ſo accounted. Now ſure, if we have this Notion of it, we ſhall think our ſelves mightily concerned to take all opportunities that come in our way, not only on Sundays, but on other days, of reſorting to the publick Aſſemblies, and joyning with them in the ſolemn ſacrifice of Prayer and Thankſgiving; and thinking it a good day to us wherein we have thus employed our ſelves.

The Sacrifices of this kind that we offer to God

God with an honeſt and devout mind, we cannot doubt will always find acceptance, and produce their effects; nay perhaps when our Cloſet-prayers will not. For there are certainly more promiſes to *publick* prayers than to *private* ones. Tho' yet both are very good, nay both are abſolutely neceſſary. But to proceed,

Fourthly, Being upon this Argument of the means and inſtruments of Religion, you may be ſure I cannot omit the mentioning of another thing, as one of thoſe points that I would moſt ſeriouſly recommend to you, and that is the ſolemn obſervation of the Lord's Day.

I am not for laying ſtreſs upon the keeping of this day, or any other, more than the nature of the thing requires. I am ſenſible that the doctrine about the obſervation of the Sabbath, as it is delivered by ſome Men, is ſuperſtitious enough, and oftentimes, where it is believed, proves rather a ſnare to mens Conſciences, than of uſe to make them more Religious. Far therefore am I from deſiring you to be nice and ſcrupulous about the *Punctilio*'s of the Lord's day ſervice. The Laws both of God and men have in that matter left a great deal to your own diſcretion, and the circumſtances you are in. But however thus much is neceſſary, that every man who profeſſeth himſelf a Chriſtian ſhould bear a conſtant Religious regard to the Lord's Day,

by

by devoting it to ſpiritual uſes, more eſpecially the publick worſhip of God.

I do not much doubt of the truth of the obſervation which ſome good men have made, *viz.* That a man ſhall proſper much better both in his Spiritual and Temporal affairs, all the week after, for his careful obſervance of the Lord's day. And I am likewiſe of opinion that thoſe men have little or no ſenſe of Religion, that make no conſcience of ſanctifying that day, or that put no difference between it and other days. Sure I am, were there nothing of a divine command for the ſetting apart this day to Religious uſes (which yet I believe there is); yet it is one of the moſt prudent and uſeful Conſtitutions that ever was made. So that even upon that account, all men that have any honour for God, or zeal for the publick good, ſhould think themſelves obliged to obſerve it.

The benefits of it are indeed unſpeakable. Not to mention the Civil or Temporal conveniences of it; in truth to the keeping up the Religion of this day we owe in a great meaſure that the very Face of Chriſtianity hath hitherto been preſerved among us. And were it not for this, for any thing I know, moſt of us in a very few years would become little better than Heathens & Barbarians. And ſo great an influence towards the making men better, or at leaſt keeping them from grow-

growing worſe, hath this practice always had; that you may obſerve the moſt profligate men among us, who for their wickedneſs come to an untimely end, do generally impute their falling into thoſe ſins which cauſed their death, to their breaking the Sabbath, as they commonly expreſs it. But,

Fifthly, Let me upon this occaſion put you in mind of another thing, which by many of us is too much neglected. And that is, the taking all opportunities of coming to the holy Sacrament.

I have often ſpoken to you about this matter, and I now deſire to remind you of it. There are little hopes you will ever make any great progreſs in vertue and holineſs, till you can bring your ſelves to a frequent and conſtant participation in this holy Myſtery. Becauſe indeed this is the ſolemn Ordinance that Chriſt hath appointed for the conveying his grace to us, and inabling us to overcome our ſins, and grow daily in vertue and goodneſs.

I know we have generally many and inveterate prejudices as to this matter. But aſſure your ſelves they are meer prejudices and no good reaſons. Every man that means and deſigns honeſtly, and endeavours to lead his life as a Chriſtian ought to do, may certainly with as little ſcruple come every Month to the Communion,

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as he may come every Week to ſay his Prayers or hear a Sermon. Nay, and I ſay further, if a man do not ſo lead his life, that he may approach to the Sacrament every Month, nay every Week, nay every Day, if there be occaſion; I am afraid that he doth not live ſo, as to be fit for it, tho' he comes but once in a year, or once in ſeven years. For the dueneſs of your preparation doth not depend upon your ſetting aſide ſo many extraordinary days for the forcing your ſelves into a Religious poſture of mind, but upon the plain natural frame and temper of your ſouls, as they conſtantly ſtand inclined to vertue and goodneſs. A man that ſeriouſly indeavours to live honeſtly and religiouſly may come to the Sacrament at an hours warning, and be a worthy Receiver. On the other ſide, a man that lives a careleſs or a ſenſual life may ſet apart a whole Week or a whole Month, for the exerciſing Repentance, and preparing himſelf for the Communion, and yet not be ſo worthy a Receiver as the other. And yet he may be a worthy Receiver too, provided he be really honeſt and ſincere in the matter he goes about; and provided that he remember his vows afterward, and do not ſink again into his former ſtate of careleſneſs and ſenſuality.

But to return to my point. I do verily think that moſt of the doubts and fears and ſcruples

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that are commonly entertained among us about receiving the Sacrament, are without ground or reason; and that every well disposed person that hath no other design in that action but to do his duty to God, and to express his belief and hopes in Jesus Christ, and his thankfulness to God for him, may as safely at any time come to the Lord's table, as he may come to Church to say his prayers. And if the case be so (as I believe it is) then of what a mighty priviledge and benefit do they deprive themselves, who when they have so many opportunities, do so seldom joyn in that solemn Institution of our Lord, which (as, I said) was design'd for no other purpose, but to be the means of our growing in grace and vertue, in love to God and to all the World.

O therefore my Brethren, let me beg of you not to be strangers at the Lord's Table. But I need not beg it of you, for I am sure you will not, whensoever it shall please God to put it into your hearts seriously to mind the concernments of your Souls, and to be heartily sensible of the need you stand in of the grace of Christ for the leading a holy and pure life.

I have but one thing more in the *Sixth* place, to leave with you, and I have done. It is not indeed of the nature of those things I have last recommended to you, that is, a means or instrument of growing more vertuous: but it is a

principal vertue it ſelf. And I do therefore recommend it to you, becauſe it is at all times uſeful, at all times ſeaſonable, but more eſpecially it ſeems to be ſo now: And that is, that you would walk in Love, and ſtudy Peace and Unity, and live in all dutiful ſubjection to thoſe whom God hath ſet over you, and endeavour in your ſeveral ſtations to promote the publick Happineſs and Tranquillity as much as is poſſible: But by no means upon any pretence whatſoever to diſturb the publick Peace, or to be any way concerned with them that do; by no means ever to ingage in any party or faction, and leaſt of all any faction in Religion, which is grounded upon a State-point.

I am ſorry the poſture of things among us gives me occaſion to mention this matter; but it is too viſible to what a height our animoſities and diſcontents are grown, and what the conſequences of them may be, unleſs there be a timely ſtop put to them, I tremble to think.

With mens differences as to their notions about the Politicks I am not concern'd; let men frame what *Hypotheſes* they pleaſe about Government, tho' I do not like them, yet I do not think my ſelf bound to Preach againſt them: But when theſe differences are come to that paſs, that they threaten both the Civil and Eccleſiaſtical Peace, there I think no Miniſter ſhould be ſilent.

Church-diviſions God knows we have, and have always had too many, but it is very grievous that thoſe who have always declared themſelves the friends of our Church and enemies to Schiſm, ſhould at this time of day, ſet their helping hand to promote a Separation.

And yet it ſeems to this height are our differences come. Some people among us that formerly were very zealous for the eſtabliſhed worſhip of the Church, are now all of a ſudden ſo diſtaſted with it, that they make a ſcruple of being preſent at our Service. Nay, ſome have proceeded ſo far as to declare, I know not upon what grounds, open war againſt us, and ſet up *Separate* Congregations in oppoſition to the *Publick*.

What is the meaning of this? hath *Schiſm* and *Separation* from the eſtabliſhed Worſhip, which heretofore was branded as ſo hainous a ſin (and deſervedly too,) ſo changed its nature all of a ſudden, that it is become not only innocent but a duty?

Have we not the ſame Government both in Church and State that we formerly had? Have we not the ſame Articles and Doctrines of Religion publickly owned and profeſſed and taught, without the leaſt alteration? Have we not the ſame Liturgy, the ſame Offices and Prayers us'd every day that have always been? Where-

there then to ground a ſeparation upon? Yes, *But the names in the Prayers are changed, and we cannot pray for thoſe that are now in Authority, as we could for thoſe that were heretofore.*

But how unreaſonable is this, when S. *Paul* has bid us to put up *prayers and ſupplications and interceſſions for all men*, eſpecially *for Kings and all that are in Authority.* Doth he make any reſtriction, any diſtinction what *Kings*, or what *perſons in Authority* we are to pray for, and what not? Doth he not expreſly ſay, we muſt pray for *all men, and for all that are in authority*? And doth not the reaſon of his exhortation imply as much, if his words did not? Namely, *that we may lead quiet and peaceable lives in all godlineſs and honeſty?*

But I pray conſider what this Doctrine leads to. If this principle be admitted to be good Divinity, then farewel all the obligations to Eccleſiaſtical Communion among Chriſtians. For what Government is there in the World that will not meet with ſuch Subjects as are not ſatisfied with it? and if that diſſatisfaction be a juſt reaſon to break Communion with the Eſtabliſhed Church, what Ligaments have we to tye Chriſtians together? What will become of *holding the Unity of the Spirit in the Bond of Peace?* What is the conſequence of this, but endleſs Schiſms and Separations?

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But further, I wish these Persons would consider what an unaccountable humour it is, to make a Rent and Schism in the Church, upon a meer point of State.

Great Revolutions have happen'd in all Ages and in all Countries, and we have frequent instances of them in story. But I believe it will not be easily found that ever any Christians separated from the Church upon account of them. Still they kept unanimously to their Doctrine and their Worship, and never concerned themselves farther in the Turns of State (how great soever they were) than peaceably to submit to the Powers in being, and heartily to pray to God so to prosper their Government, and direct all their affairs, that all their Subjects *might lead quiet and peaceable lives under them in all Godliness and Honesty.* But when in a Revolution, a Prince was advanced to the Throne, that they looked upon to be a good man, and an encourager of the True Religion; in that case they did not only readily submit to him, but acknowledged it as the great blessing of God to them, that he had raised up such a Man to rule over them. This was the Notion, and this was the Practice of the Primitive Christians as to this matter, I may indeed say of the Christians in all Ages. And whatever you may have heard to the contrary, I doubt not to say that this is

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the very Doctrine of the Church of *England*.

Let me therefore exhort all of you to be followers of Peace; to promote publick Unity and Concord as much as is possible; to study to be quiet and mind your own business; to be more concerned for your Country and Nation than the Interest of any single man in it; heartily to submit to the Government; and not only so, but to thank God for the Blessings you enjoy under it, and most earnestly to pray for the Continuance of them. Lastly, never to espouse any party or faction against the Government, nor ever to be driven away from the Communion of the Church, of which you have always professed your selves members, by any of the pretences which some warm men may suggest to you. This I dare venture to say, how uneasie soever some of you now may be in joyning with our prayers, you will at last be ten times more uneasie in separating from us. For Faction has no bounds, and God knows whither it will lead a man at last. Were there nothing else but the Heat and Turbulency, the Passion and Peevishness, the bitter Zeal and Uncharitableness that the being of a Party doth naturally ingage men in: I say, were there nothing else but this, No man that consults the peace of his own mind, would for any consideration leave the publick Communion, and espouse the cause of a separate

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Interest. But there are worse Consequences than these, and I pray God we may never feel them.

And now I have done with my Exhortation. I have spoke my thoughts very freely to you. And I hope you will receive what I have said with the same kindness that I meant it. And truely I have no reason to doubt of it, after so long an experience as I have had of your Civility and Candour. Indeed during all the time I have been among you (which hath been now near Sixteen years) I have been so kindly treated by you, and have received so many Testimonies of your Good-will, that I cannot but take this Opportunity of publickly acknowledging my Obligations to you, and returning you my Solemn Thanks for Them.

I cannot indeed say that I have done my duty as I ought, and I heartily beg of God to forgive all my defects. But I have this satisfaction, that I have sincerely endeavoured in all my Preaching, to instruct you in the true doctrine of the Gospel, and to teach you the right way that leads to Salvation. And I am so certain, that I have not been mistaken my self, nor misled you in that matter; that I dare with Confidence address my self to you in some of the words of the Apostle, which do immediately follow after my Text: *Viz. Those things which*

you

you have learned and received and heard from me, do; and the God of peace shall be with you.

I shall ever bless God for that Providence of his which placed me among you; and as I shall always, and do, earnestly desire all your prayers for me; so I shall always heartily pray for you. That God would guide and prosper you, that his good Providence would always watch over you for Good; that he would bestow upon you and your Children after you all sorts of Blessings needful and convenient for you; and especially that he would deliver you from every evil work, and preserve you to his Heavenly Kingdom. This God of his infinite mercy grant, *&c.*

FINIS.

Die Veneris 6. Novemb. 1591.

IT is Ordered by the Lords Spiritual and Temporal in Parliament Assembled, That the Thanks of this HOUSE shall be, and are hereby given to his Grace the Lord Archbishop of York for his Sermon preached yesterday before this HOUSE in the Abbey-Church at Westminster. And he is hereby desired to Print and Publish the same.

Matth. Johnson, Cler.
PARLIAMENTOR.